

ROALD

*Marius se
Merkwaardige Medisyne*



Geïllustreer deur Quentin Blake

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Roald Dahl: George's Marvellous Medicine

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Afrikaanse vertaling deur Leon Rousseau

WARNING TO READERS: Do not try to make George's Marvellous Medicine yourselves at home. It could be dangerous.

1. Grandma

'I'm going shopping in the village,' George's mother said to George on Saturday morning. 'So be a good boy and don't get up to mischief.' This was a silly thing to say to a small boy at any time. It immediately made him wonder what sort of mischief he might get up to. 'And don't forget to give Grandma her medicine at eleven o'clock,' the mother said. Then out she went, closing the back door behind her. Grandma, who was dozing in her chair by the window, opened one wicked little eye and said, 'Now you heard what your mother said, George. Don't forget my medicine.'

'No, Grandma,' George said. 'And just try to behave yourself for once while she's away.'

'Yes, Grandma,' George said.

George was bored to tears. He didn't have a brother or a sister. His father was a farmer and the farm they lived on was miles away from anywhere, so there were never any children to play with. He was tired of staring at pigs and hens and cows and sheep. He was especially tired of having to live in the same house as that grizzly old grunion of a Grandma. Looking after her all by himself was hardly the most exciting way to spend a Saturday morning.

'You can make me a nice cup of tea for a start,' Grandma said to George.

'That'll keep you out of mischief for a few minutes.'

'Yes, Grandma,' George said.

George couldn't help disliking Grandma. She was a selfish grumpy old woman. She had pale brown teeth and a small puckered up mouth like a dog's bottom.

'How much sugar in your tea today, Grandma?' George asked her.

'One spoon,' she said. 'And no milk.'

Most grandmothers are lovely, kind, helpful old ladies, but not this one. She

spent all day and every day sitting in her chair by the window, and she was always complaining, grouching, grumbling, griping about something or other. Never once, even on her best days, had she smiled at George and said, 'Well, how are you this morning, George?' or 'Why don't you and I have a game of Snakes and Ladders?' or 'How was school today?' She didn't seem to care about other people, only about herself. She was a miserable old grouch. George went into the kitchen and made Grandma a cup of tea with a teabag. He put one spoon of sugar in it and no milk. He stirred the sugar well and carried the cup into the living-room. Grandma sipped the tea. 'It's not sweet enough,' she said. Put more sugar in.'

George took the cup back to the kitchen and added another spoonful of sugar. He stirred it again and carried it carefully in to Grandma. 'Where's the saucer?' she said. 'I won't have a cup without a saucer.' George fetched her a saucer. 'And what about a teaspoon, if you please?' 'I've stirred it for you, Grandma. I stirred it well.' 'I'll stir my own tea, thank you very much,' she said. 'Fetch me a teaspoon.'

George fetched her a teaspoon. When George's mother or father were home, Grandma never ordered George about like this. It was only when she had him on her own that she began treating him badly. 'You know what's the matter with you?' the old woman said, staring at George over the rim of the teacup with those bright wicked little eyes. 'You're growing too fast. Boys who grow too fast become stupid and lazy.'

'But I can't help it if I'm growing fast, Grandma,' George said. 'Of course you can,' she snapped. 'Growing's a nasty childish habit.'

'But we have to grow, Grandma. If we didn't grow, we'd never be grown-ups.'

'Rubbish, boy, rubbish,' she said. 'Look at me. Am I growing? Certainly not.'

‘But you did once, Grandma.’

‘Only very little,’ the old woman answered. ‘I gave up growing when I was

extremely small, along with all the other nasty childish habits like laziness

and disobedience and greed and sloppiness and untidiness and stupidity. You

haven’t given up any of these things, have you?’

‘I’m still only a little boy, Grandma.’

‘You’re eight years old,’ she snorted. ‘That’s old enough to know better. If you

don’t stop growing soon, it’ll be too late.’

‘Too late for what, Grandma?’

‘It’s ridiculous,’ she went on. ‘You’re nearly as tall as me already.’

George took a good look at Grandma. She certainly was a very tiny person. Her

legs were so short she had to have a footstool to put her feet on, and her head

only came half-way up the back of the armchair.

‘Daddy says it’s fine for a man to be tall,’ George said.

‘Don’t listen to your daddy,’ Grandma said. ‘Listen to me.’

‘But how do I stop myself growing?’ George asked her.

‘Eat less chocolate,’ Grandma said.

‘Does chocolate make you grow?’

‘It makes you grow the wrong way,’ she snapped. ‘Up instead of down.’

Grandma sipped some tea but never took her eyes from the little boy who stood

before her. ‘Never grow up,’ she said. ‘Always down.’

‘Yes, Grandma.’

‘And stop eating chocolate. Eat cabbage instead.’

‘Cabbage! Oh no, I don’t like cabbage,’ George said.

‘It’s not what you like or what you don’t like,’ Grandma snapped. ‘It’s what’s

good for you that counts. From now on, you must eat cabbage three times a day.

Mountains of cabbage! And if it’s got caterpillars in it, so much the better!’

‘Owch,’ George said.

‘Caterpillars give you brains,’ the old woman said.

‘Mummy washes them down the sink,’ George said.

‘Mummy’s as stupid as you are,’ Grandma said. ‘Cabbage doesn’t taste of anything

without a few boiled caterpillars in it. Slugs, too.’

‘Not slugs!’ George cried out. ‘I couldn’t eat slugs!’

‘Whenever I see a live slug on a piece of lettuce,’ Grandma said, ‘I gobble it up quick before it crawls away. Delicious.’ She squeezed her lips together tight so that her mouth became a tiny wrinkled hole. ‘Delicious,’ she said again.

‘Worms and slugs and beetley bugs. You don’t know what’s good for you.’

‘You’re joking, Grandma.’

‘I never joke,’ she said. ‘Beetles are perhaps best of all. They go crunch!’

‘Grandma! That’s beastly!’

The old hag grinned, showing those pale brown teeth. ‘Sometimes, if you’re lucky,’ she said, ‘you get a beetle inside the stem of a stick of celery. That’s what I like.’

‘Grandma! How could you?’

‘You find all sorts of nice things in sticks of raw celery,’ the old woman went on. ‘Sometimes it’s earwigs.’

‘I don’t want to hear about it!’ cried George.

‘A big fat earwig is very tasty,’ Grandma said, licking her lips. ‘But you’ve got to be very quick, my dear, when you put one of those in your mouth. It has a pair of sharp nippers on its back end and if it grabs your tongue with those, it never lets go. So you’ve got to bite the earwig first, chop chop, before it bites you.’

George started edging towards the door. He wanted to get as far away as possible from this filthy old woman.

‘You’re trying to get away from me, aren’t you,’ she said, pointing a finger straight at George’s face. ‘You’re trying to get away from Grandma.’

Little George stood by the door staring at the old hag in the chair. She stared back at him.

Could it be, George wondered, that she was a witch? He had always thought witches were only in fairy tales, but now he was not so sure.

‘Come closer to me, little boy,’ she said, beckoning to him with a horny finger.

‘Come closer to me and I will tell you secrets.’

George didn’t move.

Grandma didn’t move either.

‘I know a great many secrets,’ she said, and suddenly she smiled. It was a thin

icy smile, the kind a snake might make just before it bites you. ‘Come over here

to Grandma and she’ll whisper secrets to you.’

George took a step backwards, edging closer to the door.

‘You mustn’t be frightened of your old Grandma,’ she said, smiling that icy

smile.

George took another step backwards.

‘Some of us,’ she said, and all at once she was leaning forward in her chair and

whispering in a throaty sort of voice George had never heard her use before.

‘Some of us,’ she said, ‘have magic powers that can twist the creatures of this

earth into wondrous shapes ...’

A tingle of electricity flashed down the length of George’s spine. He began to

feel frightened.

‘Some of us,’ the old woman went on, ‘have fire on our tongues and sparks in our

bellies and wizardry in the tips of our fingers ...’

‘Some of us know secrets that would make your hair stand straight up on end and

your eyes pop out of their sockets ...’

George wanted to run away, but his feet seemed stuck to the floor.

‘We know how to make your nails drop off and teeth grow out of your fingers

instead.’

George began to tremble. It was her face that frightened him most of all, the

frosty smile, the brilliant unblinking eyes.

‘We know how to have you wake up in the morning with a long tail coming out from

behind you.’

‘Grandma!’ he cried out. ‘Stop!’

‘We know secrets, my dear, about dark places where dark things live and squirm

and slither all over each other ...'

George made a dive for the door.

'It doesn't matter how far you run,' he heard her saying, 'you won't ever get

away ...'

George ran into the kitchen, slamming the door behind him.

1. Ouma

“Ek gaan vanoggend dorp toe,” sê Marius sC mjr ®\$Qt#aiei dagoggend vir hom, “Wees nou soet en niocnie moeilikheid maak nie.”

Dit is ’n lawwe ding om vir ’n seuntjie te sê. Dit laat hom dadelik wonder watter soort moeilikheid hy miskien kan maak, “En moenie vergeet om vir Ouma om elfuur haar medisyne te gee-nie,” sê sy ma. Toe woerts sy uit. Die agterdeur klap agter haar toe.

Ouma, wat in haar stoel by die venster sit en dommel, maak ’n bose ogie oop en sê: “Nou, Marius, jy’t gehoor wat jou ma gesê het. Moenie my medisyne vergeet nie.”

“Nee, Ouma,” sê Marius.

“En probeer jou hierdie keer gedra - net dié een keer.” “Ja, Ouma,” sê Marius.

Marius is doodverveel. Hy het nie ’n broer of ’n suster nie. Sy pa is ’n boer, en die plaas waarop hulle boer is kilometers van enige dorp af. Daar is nooit ander kinder om mee te speel nie. Hy is moeg vir die varke en die hennie en die koeie en die skape. Hy is veral moeg vir Ouma, die grieseligste ou vrou wat jy jou kan voorstel. Hy kan aan lekkerder dinge dink om op ’n Saterdagoggend te doen as om háár op te pas.

“Eers kan jy vir my ’n lekker koppie tee maak,” sê Ouma vir Marius.

“Dit sal jou ’n paar minute lank uit die kwaad hou.”

“Ja, Ouma,” antwoord Marius.

Dit is baie moeilik om vir Ouma lief te wees. Sy is ’n selfsugtige, êerige ou vrou. Sy het bleek-bruin tande en ’n pruil-mondjie.

“Hoeveel suiker wil Ouma vandag in Ouma se tee hê?” vra Marius.

“Een lepel,” sê sy. “En niks melk nie.”

Die meeste oumas is lieflike, vriendelike, behulpsume ou dames, maar nie dié een nie. Sy sit aldag en heeldag in haar stoel by die venster en al wat sy ooit doen is kla, sanik, seur, mopper, mor, jeremieer en tjommel. Nog nooit, nie eens op haar bête dae nie, het sy Marius met ’n vriendelike glimlag begroet en gevra “Nou ja, hoe gaan dit vanoggend met jou, Marius?” of “Hoekom speel ons nie ’n potjie dambord nie?” of “Het jy vandag ’n lekker dag op skool gehad?” Sy steur haar glad nie aan ander mense nie, net aan haarself. Sy is ’n ellendige ou klapot.

Marius gaan na die kombuis en maak vir Ouma met ’n teesakkie ’n koppie tee. Hy sit een lepel suiker daarin en geen melk

nie. Hy roer die suiker goed en dra die koppie na die woonkamer. Ouma proe aan die tee. “Dis nie soet genoeg nie,” sê sy. “Nog suiker.” Marius neem die koppie weer na die kombuis en voeg nog ’n lepel suiker by. Hy roer dit weer en neem dit versigtig vir Ouma.

“Waar’s die piering?” sê sy. “lik gaan nic sonder ’n piering tee drink nie.”

Marius gaan haal ’n piering.

“It’n wat van ’n teelepel, kêreltjie?”

“Hk het dit vir Ouma geroer. Regtig, ek het dit goed geroer.”

“Ek sal my eie tee roer, dankie,” sê sy. “Maak soos ek sê. (iaan haal ’n teelepel.”

Marius bring vir haar ’n teelepel.

As Marius se ma of pa by die huis is, is Ouma nooit so baasspelerig nie. Dis net wanneer sy horn alleen kry, dat sy horn begin sleg behandel.

“Wee’ jy wat makeer jou?” krys die ou vrou en tuur met haar blink, bouse ogies oor die rand van haar koppie na hom. “Jy groei te vinnig. Seuns wat te vinnig groei, word dom en lui.”

“Maar ek kan dit nie help as ek vinnig groei nie, Ouma,” sê Marius.

“Natuurlik kan jy,” snou sy. “Groei - dis ’n lae, kinderag-tige gewoonte.”

“Maar ons moet groei, Ouma. As ons nie gegroei het nie, sou ons nooit groot geword het nie.”

“Nonsens, jou klein ellende, nonsens,” sê sy. “Kyk na my. Groei ek? Bepaald nie.”

“Maar Ouma hét tog lank gelede.”

“Net ’n klein bietjie,” antwoord die ou vrou. “Ek het my groei jy kan maar sê ontgroei toe ek nog baie klein was, saam met al die ander nare kindergewoontes soos luiheid en ongehoorsaamheid en gulsigheid en slowwerigheid en on-netheid en domgeit. Jy’t nog nie dié goed laat staan nie, nê? Nie een nie!”

“Ek is nog maar ’n seuntjie, Ouma.”

“Jy’s agt jaar oud,” snork sy. “Dis oud genoegom beter te weet. As jy nie gou ophou groei nie, sal dit te laat wees.”

“Te laat waarvoor, Ouma?”

“Dis belaglik,” vervolg sy. “Jy’s al byna so lank soos ek.” Marius kyk sy ouma ondersoekend aan. Ja-nee, sy is bepaald baie klein. Haar bene is so kort dat haar voete op ’n voetbankie moet rus en haar kop is laer as die leunstoel se rug.

“Pa sê dis goed as ’n man lank word,” sê Marius.

“Moenie na joupaluister nie,” sê Ouma. “Luistervir my.” “Maar hoe kan ek ophou groei?” vra Marius.

“Eet minder sjokolade,” sê Ouma. “Laat sjokolade mens groei?”

“Dit laat jou in die verkeerde rigting groei,” sis sy. “Boontoe in plaas van ondertoe.”

Ouma suig aan haar tee, maar haar ogies bly stip op die seuntjie wat voor haar staan. “Moetnootopgroeinie,” sê sy. “Netaf.”

“Ja, Ouma.”

“En hou op met sjokolade eet. Eet liewer kool.” “Kool! O nee, ek hou nie van kool nie,” sê Marius.

“Dit maak nie saak waarvan jy hou nie,” snou Ouma. “Dis wat vir jou goed is wat tel. Van nou af moet jy drie maal per dag kool eet. Hope kool! Berge kool! En as daar ruspes in is, des te beter!”

“Eina,” sê Marius.

“Ruspes gee jou verstand,” sê die ou vrou.

“Ma spoel hulle In die opwasbak af,” merk Marius op.

“Jou ma is net so dom soos jy,” sê Ouma. “Kool smaak maar flou as daar nie ’n paar gebraaide ruspes in is nie. Slakke ook. Die soort sonder dop. Slopslakke.”

“Nie slakke nie!” roep Marius uit. “Ek kan nie slakke eet nie.”

“As ek ’n lewendige slak op ’n slaaiblaar sien,” sê Ouma, “slurp ek dit gou op voor dit kan wegkruip. Heerlik.” Sy pruil haar lippe tot haar mond ’n klein verrimpelde gaatjie word. “Heerlik,” sê sy weer. “Wurms en slopslakke en brosgebakke kewers, so bros soos krakelinge, krakelingkewers. Jy weet nie wat lekker is nie.”

“Ouma maak seker ’n grap.”

“Ek maak nooit ’n grap nie,” sê sy. “Kewers is die beste van almal. Hulle kraak.”

“Ouma! Dis aaklig!”

Die ou vrou grynslag en wys haar bruin tande. “As jy gelukkig is,” sê sy, “kry jy partykeer ’n krakelingkewer binne-in ’n stuk seldery. Dis waarvan ek hou.”

“Ouma, hoe kan Ouma so sê?”

“Jy kry allerlei lekkergoed in rou seldery,” vervolg die ou vrou. “Partykeer is dit oorkruipers.”

“Ek wil dit nie hoor nie!” skree Marius.

“’n Lekker vet oorkruiper is baie smaaklik,” sê Ouma, en lek haar lippe af. “Maar jy moet baie gou maak, my boytjie, as jy een van daai goed in jou mond prop, ’n Oorkruiper het skerp knypers aan sy agterwêreld en as hy jou tong met hulle gryp, laat hy nooit los nie. Dis hoekom jy die oorkruiper eer-ste moet byt, kners-knars, voor hy jou byt.”

Marius begin stadig agteruit na die deur beweeg. Hy wil so gou en so ver as moontlik van dié vieslike ou vrou wegkom.

“Jy probeer van my wegkom, nê?” sê sy en wys met haar krom vinger reguit na Marius se gesig. “Jy probeer van jou ouma wegkom.”

Marius staan by die deur en tuur die ou vrou in die stoel aan. Sy tuur terug.

Kan dit wees, wonder Marius, dat sy 'n heks is? Hy het altyd gedink hekse is net in stories, maar nou is hy nie meer so seker nie.

“Kom hier, boytjie,” sê sy, en beduie met 'n krom vinger.

“Kom staan hier by my, dig by my, dan vertel ek jou geheime.”

Marius roer nie. Ouma roer ook nie.

“Ek ken baie geheime,” sê sy, en skielik glimlag sy. Dit is 'n dun, ysige glimlag, seker soos 'n slang glimlag net voor hy jou pik.

“Kom hier by jou ousa, dan fluister sy geheime in jou oor.”

Marius gee 'n tree agteruit. Hy is nou naby die deur.

“Jy moenie vir Ouma bang wees nie,” sê sy, en gee weer daardie ysige glimlag.

Marius retireer verder.

“Party van ons,” sê sy, en skielik leun sy vooroor en fluister met 'n rasperstem wat Marius nog nooit tevore by haar gehoor het nie. “Party van ons,” sê sy, “het towermagte en ons kan die skepsels van hierdie aarde in wonderbaarlike vorms verander. .

lets soos 'n elektriese stroom loop in Marius se ruggraat heen en weer. Hy begin bang voel.

“Party van ons,” vervolg die ou vrou, “het vuur op ons tongeenvonkeinsonsbuikengoëleryinonsvingertoppe...”

“Party van ons ken geheime... geheime wat jou hare orent sal laat staan en jou oë uit hul kaste sal laat spring...” Marius wil weghardloop, maar dit voel asof sy voete aan die vloer vasgelym is.

“Ons weet hoe om jou naels te laat afval, en dan laat ons tande uit jou vingertoppe groei.”

Marius begin bewe. Dit is haar gesig wat hom die bangste maak, die ysige glimlag, die helder, onknipperende ogies.

“Ons weet hoe om te sorg dat jy in die oggend met 'n lang stert van agter wakker word.”

“Ouma!” roep hy uit. “Hou op!”

“Ons ken geheime, boytjie, oor donker plekke waar daar donker klam goed krioel en wriemel en almal kruis en dwars oormekaar seil...”

Marius spring na die deur.

“Maak nie saak hoe ver jy hardloop nie,” hoor hy haar sê, “jy sal nooit wegkom nie. .

Marius storm by die kombuis in en klap die deur agter hom toe.

2. The Marvellous Plan

George sat himself down at the table in the kitchen. He was shaking a little.

Oh, how he hated Grandma! He really hated that horrid old witchy woman. And all

of a sudden he had a tremendous urge to do something about her. Something

whopping. Something absolutely terrific. A real shocker. A sort of explosion. He

wanted to blow away the witchy smell that hung about her in the next room. He

may have been only eight years old but he was a brave little boy. He was ready

to take this old woman on.

‘I’m not going to be frightened by her,’ he said softly to himself. But he was

frightened. And that’s why he wanted suddenly to explode her away.

Well ... not quite away. But he did want to shake the old woman up a bit.

Very well, then. What should it be, this whopping terrific exploding shocker for

Grandma?

He would have liked to put a firework banger under her chair but he didn’t have

one.

He would have liked to put a long green snake down the back of her dress but he

didn’t have a long green snake.

He would have liked to put six big black rats in the room with her and lock the

door but he didn’t have six big black rats.

As George sat there pondering this interesting problem, his eye fell upon the

bottle of Grandma’s brown medicine standing on the sideboard. Rotten stuff it

seemed to be. Four times a day a large spoonful of it was shovelled into her

mouth and it didn’t do her the slightest bit of good. She was always just as

horrid after she’d had it as she’d been before. The whole point of medicine,

surely, was to make a person better. If it didn't do that, then it was quite useless.

So-ho! thought George suddenly. Ah-ha! Ho-hum! I know exactly what I'll do. I

shall make her a new medicine, one that is so strong and so fierce and so

fantastic it will either cure her completely or blow off the top of her head.

I'll make her a magic medicine, a medicine no doctor in the world has ever made before.

George looked at the kitchen clock. It said five past ten. There was nearly an

hour left before Grandma's next dose was due at eleven.

'Here we go, then!' cried George, jumping up from the table. 'A magic medicine

it shall be!'

'So give me a bug and a jumping flea,

Give me two snails and lizards three,

And a slimy squiggler from the sea,

And the poisonous sting of a bumblebee,

And the juice from the fruit of the ju-jube tree,

And the powdered bone of a wombat's knee.

And one hundred other things as well

Each with a rather nasty smell.

I'll stir them up, I'll boil them long,

A mixture tough, a mixture strong.

And then, heigh-ho, and down it goes,

A nice big spoonful (hold your nose)

Just gulp it down and have no fear.

"How do you like it, Granny dear?"

Will she go pop? Will she explode?

Will she go flying down the road?

Will she go poof in a puff of smoke?

Start fizzing like a can of Coke?

Who knows? Not I. Let's wait and see.

(I'm glad it's neither you nor me.)

Oh Grandma, if you only knew

What I have got in store for you!'

2. Die wonderlike plan

Marius gaan sit by die kombuistafel. Hy bewe 'n bietjie. O, maar hoe haat hy dié Ouma van hom! Hy haat haar regtig, daai nare ou heksevrou. En skielik voel hy lus om iets aan te vang. Iets enorms. Iets absoluut oorweldigends. Iets skok-kends. 'n Soort ontploffing. Hy wil die nare heksreuk in die kamer langsaan wegblaas. Al is hy maar agt jaar oud, is hy 'n dapper knapie. Hy is heeltemal bereid om kragte met die ou vrou te meet.

“Ek gaan nie dat sy my bang maak nie,” fluister hy. Maar hy is bang. En dit is hoekom hy haar skielik wil laat ontplof.

Wei... nie heeltemal só erg nie. Maar hy wil haar 'n bietjie ruk.

Nou maar goed. Wat kan dit wees, hierdie ontsettende, enorme, ontploffende skokding vir Ouma?

Dit sal lekker wees om een van daai groot rooi klappers onder haar stoel te sit, maar hy het nie een nie.

Dit sal lekker wees om 'n lang groen slang in haar rug te laat afseil, maar hy het nie 'n lang groen slang nie.

Dit sal lekker wees om ses groot swart rotte by haar in die kamer te sit en die deur te sluit, maar hy het nie ses groot swart rotte nie.

Terwyl Marius oor hierdie interessante probleem sit en na-dink, val sy oog op Ouma se bottel bruin medisyne op die buf fet. Dit moet seker aaklige goed wees. Vier keer op 'n dag word 'n groot lepel vol medisyne in haar mond afgeprop en dit lyk nie asof dit haar enigsins help nie. Na sy dit geneem het, is sy nog altyd net so naar as tevore. Die hele doel van medisyne is tog seker om iemand gesonder te maak. As dit nie gebeur nie, dan help dit nie.

So-o! dink Marius skielik. A-ha! Ja-nee! Ek weet presies wat ek gaan doen. Ek gaan vir haar nuwe medisyne maak, medisyne wat so sterk en so kwaai en so fantasties is dat dit haar of volkome sal genees of haar kop sal afblaas. Ek gaan vir haar towermedisyne maak, 'n medisyne wat geen dokter in die wêreld nog ooit gemaak het nie.

Marius kyk na die horlosie teen die muur. Vyf oor tien. Daar is nog byna 'n uur oor voor Ouma om elfuur haar volgende dosis moet kry.

“Hiert!” sê Marius en spring uit sy stoel op. “'n Towermedisyne sal dit wees.”

“Gee my 'n vlooi en 'n luis of drie,

'n by se gif en 'n tor se knie,

vlermuisgebeentes en koorsboomsap, toorgoed en doepa en moetiespappap, slakke en sliere en koddige diere,

rotte en miere en slymige wiere, goed wat woeker en goed wat rank, al's met 'n taamlieke wrede klank.

Ek sal hul roer, ek sal hul kook,
ek sal my taaibosvuurtjie stook. My sop sal prut, my pot sal sing; dan
sal ek dit na Ouma bring.
'n Hele lepelvol, ou vrou
(ons hoop maar net jou keelgat hou). Sluk alles weg.
So-ja, dis reg.
Jy weet die beste dop smaak sleg. Daar gaan dit af. O wee, en nou?
Gaan sy ontplof of gaan sy hou? Gaan sy bruis soos sodawater? Gaan
die goed haar maag kalfater? Dalk kom daar uit haar ore rook, of sal
sy soos 'n ketel kook? Ag Ouma, kon jy raai of gis
wat ek om elfuur op gaan dis!"

3. George Begins to Make the Medicine

George took an enormous saucepan out of the cupboard and placed it on the kitchen table.

‘George!’ came the shrill voice from the next room. ‘What are you doing?’

‘Nothing, Grandma,’ he called out.

‘You needn’t think I can’t hear you just because you closed the door! You’re

rattling the saucepans!’

‘I’m just tidying the kitchen, Grandma.’

Then there was silence.

George had absolutely no doubts whatsoever about how he was going to make his

famous medicine. He wasn’t going to fool about wondering whether to put in a

little bit of this or a little bit of that. Quite simply, he was going to put in

EVERYTHING he could find. There would be no messing about, no hesitating, no

wondering whether a particular thing would knock the old girl sideways or not.

The rule would be this: whatever he saw, if it was runny or powdery or gooey, in

it went.

Nobody had ever made a medicine like that before. If it didn’t actually cure

Grandma, then it would anyway cause some exciting results. It would be worth

watching.

George decided to work his way round the various rooms one at a time and see

what they had to offer.

He would go first to the bathroom. There are always lots of funny things in a

bathroom. So upstairs he went, carrying the enormous two-handled saucepan before

him.

In the bathroom, he gazed longingly at the famous and dreaded medicine cupboard.

But he didn’t go near it. It was the only thing in the entire house he

was
forbidden to touch. He had made solemn promises to his parents
about this and he
wasn't going to break them. There were things in there, they had told
him, that
could actually kill a person, and although he was out to give Grandma
a pretty
fiery mouthful, he didn't really want a dead body on his hands.
George put the
saucepan on the floor and went to work.
Number one was a bottle labelled GOLDEN GLOSS HAIR SHAMPOO.
He emptied it into
the pan. 'That ought to wash her tummy nice and clean,' he said.
He took a full tube of TOOTHPASTE and squeezed out the whole lot of
it in one
long worm. 'Maybe that will brighten up those horrid brown teeth of
hers,' he
said.
There was an aerosol can of SUPERFOAM SHAVING SOAP belonging
to his father.
George loved playing with aerosols. He pressed the button and kept
his finger on
it until there was nothing left. A wonderful mountain of white foam
built up in
the giant saucepan.
With his fingers, he scooped out the contents of a jar of VITAMIN
ENRICHED FACE
CREAM.
In went a small bottle of scarlet NAIL VARNISH. 'If the toothpaste
doesn't clean
her teeth,' George said, 'then this will paint them as red as roses.'
He found another jar of creamy stuff labelled HAIR REMOVER.
SMEAR IT ON YOUR
LEGS, it said, AND ALLOW TO REMAIN FOR FIVE MINUTES. George
tipped it all into
the saucepan.
There was a bottle with yellow stuff inside it called DISHWORTH'S
FAMOUS
DANDRUFF CURE. In it went.
There was something called BRILLIDENT FOR CLEANING FALSE
TEETH. It was a white
powder. In that went, too.
He found another aerosol can, NEVERMORE PONKING DEODORANT
SPRAY, GUARANTEED, it

said, TO KEEP AWAY UNPLEASANT BODY SMELLS FOR A WHOLE DAY. 'She could use plenty of that,' George said as he sprayed the entire canful into the saucepan. LIQUID PARAFFIN, the next one was called. It was a big bottle. He hadn't the faintest idea what it did to you, but he poured it in anyway. That, he thought, looking around him, was about all from the bathroom.

On his mother's dressing-table in the bedroom, George found yet another lovely aerosol can. It was called HELGA'S HAIRSET. HOLD TWELVE INCHES AWAY FROM THE HAIR AND SPRAY LIGHTLY. He squirted the whole lot into the saucepan. He did enjoy squirting these aerosols.

There was a bottle of perfume called FLOWERS OF TURNIPS. It smelled of old cheese. In it went.

And in, too, went a large round box of POWDER. It was called PINK PLASTER. There was a powder-puff on top and he threw that in as well for luck. He found a couple of LIPSTICKS. He pulled the greasy red things out of their little cases and added them to the mixture.

The bedroom had nothing more to offer, so George carried the enormous saucepan downstairs again and trotted into the laundry-room where the shelves were full of all kinds of household items.

The first one he took down was a large box of SUPERWHITE FOR AUTOMATIC WASHING-MACHINES. DIRT, it said, WILL DISAPPEAR LIKE MAGIC. George didn't know whether Grandma was automatic or not, but she was certainly a dirty old woman.

'So she'd better have it all,' he said, tipping in the whole boxful. Then there was a big tin of WAXWELL FLOOR POLISH. IT REMOVES FILTH AND FOUL MESSES FROM YOUR FLOOR AND LEAVES EVERYTHING SHINY BRIGHT, it said. George scooped the orange-coloured waxy stuff out of the tin and plonked it into the pan.

There was a round cardboard carton labelled FLEA POWDER FOR

DOGS. KEEP WELL AWAY
FROM THE DOG'S FOOD, it said, BECAUSE THIS POWDER, IF
EATEN, WILL MAKE THE DOG
EXPLODE. 'Good,' said George, pouring it all into the saucepan.
He found a box of CANARY SEED on the shelf. 'Perhaps it'll make the
old bird
sing,' he said, and in it went.
Next, George explored the box with shoe-cleaning materials —
brushes and tins
and dusters. Well now, he thought, Grandma's medicine is brown, so
my medicine
must also be brown or she'll smell a rat. The way to colour it, he
decided,
would be with BROWN SHOE-POLISH. The large tin he chose was
labelled DARK TAN.
Splendid. He scooped it all out with an old spoon and plopped it into
the pan.
He would stir it up later.
On his way back to the kitchen, George saw a bottle of GIN standing
on the
sideboard. Grandma was very fond of gin. She was allowed to have a
small nip of
it every evening. Now he would give her a treat. He would pour in the
whole
bottle. He did.
Back in the kitchen, George put the huge saucepan on the table and
went over to
the cupboard that served as a larder. The shelves were bulging with
bottles and
jars of every sort. He chose the following and emptied them one by
one into the
saucepan:

A TIN OF CURRY POWDER
A TIN OF MUSTARD POWDER
A BOTTLE OF 'EXTRA HOT' CHILLI SAUCE
A TIN OF BLACK PEPPERCORNS
A BOTTLE OF HORSERADISH SAUCE

'There!' he said aloud. 'That should do it!'
'George!' came the screechy voice from the next room. 'Who are you
talking to in
there? What are you up to?'
'Nothing, Grandma, absolutely nothing,' he called back.

‘Is it time for my medicine yet?’

‘No, Grandma, not for about half an hour.’

‘Well, just see you don’t forget it.’

‘I won’t, Grandma,’ George answered. ‘I promise I won’t.’

3. Marius begin die brousel brou

Marius haal 'n enorme kastrol uit die kas en sit dit op die kombuistafel.

“Marius!” kom die skril stemmetjie uit die kamer langsaan hom. “Wat maak jy?” “Niks, Ouma,” roep hy.

“Moenie dink ek kan jou nie hoor omdat jy die deur toegemaak het nie! Jy rammel die kastrolle.”

“Ek maak maar net die kombuis aan die kant, Ouma.”

Toe is daar stilte.

Marius twyfel nie oor hoe hy sy fameuse medisyne gaan maak nie. Hy gaan nie tyd mors deur te wonder hoeveel van dié of hoeveel van dáái hy moet ingooi nie. Dit gaan baie een-voudig wees. Hy gaan ALLESwat hy kan kry, daar ingooi. Daar gaan geen gelol wees nie, geen aarseling, geen oorwe-ging van 'n besondere bestanddeel nie. Net een reel sal geld: Wat hy ook al sien, as dit loperig of poeierig of stroperig is, gaan dit in.

Niemand het ooit tevore so 'n medisyne gemaak nie. As dit Ouma nie genees nie, sal dit in elk geval interessante resul-tate hê. Dit sal die moeite werd wees om dop te hou.

Marius besluit om die kamers een vir een af te handel.

Eers gaan hy badkamer toe. Daar is altyd 'n klomp snaakse goed in 'n badkamer. Die badkamer is bo. Versigtig dra Marius die reusagtige kastrol by die trap op.

In die badkamer kyk hy verlangend na die beroemde en gevreesde medisynekas. Maar hy gaan nie daar naby nie. Dit is die enigste ding in die hele huis waaraan hy glad nie mag raak nie. Hy het vir sy ouers plegtige beloftes hieroor gemaak, en hy gaan hulle nie verbreek nie. Daar is dinge in die medisynekas, het hulle hom verseker, wat 'n mens kan doodmaak, en hoewel hy vas van plan is om 'n brander in Ouma se keelgat af te jaag, is hy nie van plan om met 'n lyk opgeskeep te sit nie. Marius sit die kastrol op die vloer neer en spring aan die werk, Heel eerste sien hy 'n bottel met die etiket gouegloed

haarsjampoe. Hy maak dit in die kastrol leeg. “Dit behoort haar maag mooi uit te spoel,” sê hy.

Hy neem die buisie tandepasta en druk die hele lang wurm in die kastrol uit. “Miskien sal dit daardie vreeslike vuil tande van haar 'n bietjie opvrolik,” sê hy.

Dan is daar 'n spuitblik wat aan sy pa behoort:

superskuim-skeerseep. Marius is baie lief om met aerosols te speel. Hy druk die knoppie en hou sy vinger daarop tot daar niks meer oor is

nie. 'n Wonderlike berg wit skuim bou in die reuse-kastrol op. Met sy vingers maak hy 'n fles vitamien-verrykte gesigs—room leeg.

Daarop volg 'n botteltjie naellak. “As die tandepasta nie haar tande skoonmaak nie,” sê Marius, “sal dié goed hulle soos rose verf.”

In nóg 'n fles is daar romerige goed: haarverwyderaar.

SMEER DIT AAN U BENE, lui die etiket, EN LAAT VYF MINUTE aanbly. Marius maak dit in die kastrol leeg.

Daar is 'n bottel vol geel goed. Die etiket sê vanonderse heroemde skilferbehandeling. Die hele bottel gaan in die kastrol.

Daar is 'n wit poeier: brillident vir skitterende kunstande. Marius maak dit in die kastrol leeg.

Die etiket op nóg 'n aërosol-blik lui: nimmerstink-reuk—WEERDER. WAARBORG: HIERDIE REUKWEERDER SAL ONAANGENAME LIGGAAMSGEURE TWAALF UUR LANK weghou. “Sy kan baie daarvan gebruik,” mompel Marius en spuit die hele blik in die kastrol leeg.

APTEKERSPARAFFIEN (MINERAALOLIE) is die etiket Op die volgende bottel. Dit is 'n groot bottel. Hy het geen idee dat dit in werklikheid 'n sterk lakseermiddel is nie, maar hy gooi dit ook by.

Dit, dink hy en kyk om hom rond, is omtrent alles wat hy in die badkamer sal kry.

Op sy ma se kleedtafel in die slaapkamer kry Marius nog 'n lieflike aërosol-blik. Die etiket lui helga se haarset. hou DERTIG CM VAN DIE HARE AF WEG EN SPROEILIGGIES. Hy Spuit die hele klomp in die kastrol. Dis darem baie lekker om die goed uit te spuit.

Daar is 'n bottel parfuum, eau de pong. Dit ruik na ou kaas. Dit kom by.

Volgende aan die beurt is 'n groot ronde doos gesig-poeier. Bo-op die doos is 'n poeierkwas en ook dit beland in die kastrol.

Hy vind twee of drie lipstiffies. Hy trek die ghrieserige rooi lipsel uit die stiffies en gooi hulle in die kastrol.

Nou is die slaapkamer gestroop. Marius dra die enorme kastrol weer ondertoe en strompel by die waskamer in, waar die rakke vol allerlei huishoudelike benodigdhede staan.

Die eerste wat hy ingooi, is die inhoud van 'n groot doos superwit vir alle wasoutomate. vuilis, lui die slagspreuk, sal met 'N towerslag verdwyn. Marius weet nie of Ouma outomaties is nie, maar, dink hy, sy is bepaald 'n vuil ou vrou. “Sy moet dit maar alles kry,” besluit hy en laat die poeier in die kastrol glip.

Op 'n groot blik staan daar waxwell-vloerpolitoer. dit verwyder vullis en gemors van die vloer en laat alles skitterblink. Marius skep die oranje goed met sy vingers uit die blik en laat dit in

die kastrol plons.

Daar is 'n ronde kartondoos: vlooiopoeier virhonde. hou van hond se kos weg, lui die opskrif, want as hierdie poeier ingeneem word, sal dit die hond laat ontplof.

“Mooi,” sê Marius.

Langs die vlooiopoeier kry hy 'n doos kanariesaad. “Miskien laat dit die ou vrou sing,” sê hy, en voeg dit by.

Nou verken Marius die kis vol skoenborsels, -poetsers en politoer. Nou ja, dink hy, Ouma se medisyne is bruin, dus moet myne óók bruin wees, anders kom sy iets agter. Die donkerbruin skoenpolitoer sal die beste kleursel wees, dink hy. Met 'n ou lepel skep hy al die politoer uit die blik en gooi dit in die kastrol. Hy sal dit later roer.

Op weg na die kombuis sien Marius 'n bottel jenewer op die buffet staan. Ouma is baie lief vir jenewer. Sy kry elke aand 'n klein sopie. Nou sal hy haar verwen. Hy gooi die hele bottel in.

In die kombuis sit Marius die reuse-kastrol op die tafel en stap na die koskas. Die rakke is propvol allerlei bottels en flesse. Hy kies die volgende en maak hulle een vir een in die kastrol leeg: 'N BLIK KERRIEPOEIER

'N BLIK MOSTERDPOEIER

'N BOTTEL “EKSTRA STERK” RISSIESOUS

'N BLIK SWART PEPERKORRELS

'N BOTTEL PEPERWORTELSOUS

“Mooi!” sê hy hardop. “Dis seker genoeg.”

“Marius!” skree die stem uit die kamer langsaan. “Met wie praat jy? Watter kattedekwaad vang jy nou weer aan?”

“Niks nie, Ouma, glad niks nie,” roep hy. “Is dit al tyd vir my medisyne?”

“Nee, Ouma, daar's nog omtrent 'n halfuur oor.” “Wei, sorg dat jy nie vergeet nie.”

“Ek sal nie, Ouma,” antwoord Marius. “Dit beloof ek.”

4. Animal Pills

At this point, George suddenly had an extra good wheeze. Although the medicine cupboard in the house was forbidden ground, what about the medicines his father kept on the shelf in the shed next to the henhouse? The animal medicines?

What about those?

Nobody had ever told him he mustn't touch them.

Let's face it, George said to himself, hair-spray and shaving-cream and shoe-polish are all very well and they will no doubt cause some splendid

explosions inside the old geezer, but what the magic mixture now needs is a

touch of the real stuff, real pills and real tonics, to give it punch and muscle.

George picked up the heavy three-quarters full saucepan and carried it out of

the back door. He crossed the farmyard and headed straight for the shed

alongside the henhouse. He knew his father wouldn't be there. He was out

haymaking in one of the meadows.

George entered the dusty old shed and put the saucepan on the bench. Then he

looked up at the medicine shelf. There were five big bottles there. Two were

full of pills, two were full of runny stuff and one was full of powder.

'I'll use them all,' George said. 'Grandma needs them. Boy, does she need them!'

the first bottle he took down contained an orange-coloured powder. The label

said, FOR CHICKENS WITH FOUL PEST, HEN GRIPE, SORE BEAKS, GAMMY LEGS,

COCKERELITIS, EGG TROUBLE, BROODINESS OR LOSS OF FEATHERS. MIX ONE SPOONFUL ONLY

WITH EACH BUCKET OF FEED.

'Well,' George said aloud to himself as he tipped in the whole bottleful, 'the

old bird won't be losing any feathers after she's had a dose of this.'

The next bottle he took down had about five hundred gigantic purple

pills in it.

FOR HORSES WITH HOARSE THROATS, it said on the label. THE HOARSE-THROATED HORSE

SHOULD SUCK ONE PILL TWICE A DAY.

‘Grandma may not have a hoarse throat,’ George said, ‘but she’s certainly got a

sharp tongue. Maybe they’ll cure that instead.’ Into the saucepan went the five

hundred gigantic purple pills.

Then there was a bottle of thick yellowish liquid. FOR COWS, BULLS AND BULLOCKS,

the label said. WILL CURE COW POX, COW MANGE, CRUMPLED HORNS, BAD BREATH IN

BULLS, EARACHE, TOOTHACHE, HEADACHE, HOOFACHE, TAILACHE AND SORE UDDERS.

‘That grumpy old cow in the living-room has every one of those rotten illnesses,’ George said. ‘She’ll need it all.’ With a slop and a gurgle, the yellow liquid splashed into the now nearly full saucepan.

The next bottle contained a brilliant red liquid. SHEEPDIP, it said on the

label. FOR SHEEP WITH SHEEPROT AND FOR GETTING RID OF TICKS AND FLEAS. MIX ONE

SPOONFUL IN ONE GALLON OF WATER AND SLOSH IT OVER THE SHEEP. CAUTION, DO NOT

MAKE THE MIXTURE ANY STRONGER OR THE WOOL WILL FALL OUT AND THE ANIMAL WILL BE

NAKED.

‘By gum,’ said George, ‘how I’d love to walk in and slosh it all over old Grandma and watch the ticks and fleas go jumping off her. But I can’t.

I mustn’t. So she’ll have to drink it instead.’ He poured the bright red medicine

into the saucepan.

The last bottle on the shelf was full of pale green pills. PIG PILLS, the label

announced. FOR PIGS WITH PORK PRICKLES, TENDER TROTTERS, BRISTLE BLIGHT AND

SWINE SICKNESS. GIVE ONE PILL PER DAY. IN SEVERE CASES TWO PILLS MAY BE GIVEN,

BUT MORE THAN THAT WILL MAKE THE PIG ROCK AND ROLL.

‘Just the stuff,’ said George, ‘for that miserable old pig back there in the

house. She’ll need a very big dose.’ He tipped all the green pills, hundreds and

hundreds of them, into the saucepan.

There was an old stick lying on the bench that had been used for stirring paint.

George picked it up and started to stir his marvellous concoction. The mixture

was as thick as cream, and as he stirred and stirred, many wonderful colours

rose up from the depths and blended together, pinks, blues, greens, yellows and

browns.

George went on stirring until it was all well mixed, but even so there were

still hundreds of pills lying on the bottom that hadn't melted. And there was

his mother's splendid powder-puff floating on the surface. 'I shall have to boil

it all up,' George said. 'One good quick boil on the stove is all it needs.' And

with that he staggered back towards the house with the enormous heavy saucepan.

On the way, he passed the garage, so he went in to see if he could find any

other interesting things. He added the following:

Half a pint of ENGINE OIL — to keep Grandma's engine going smoothly.

Some ANTI-FREEZE — to keep her radiator from freezing up in winter.

A handful of GREASE — to grease her creaking joints.

Then back to the kitchen.

4. Dierepille

In dié stadium kry Marius skielik 'n wonderlike plan. Die medisynekas in die badkamer is nou wel verbode, maar wat van die medisynes op die rak in die skuur langs die hoenderhok? Die dieremedisynes?

Wat van hulle?

Niemand het hom ooit gesê hy moenie met hulle lol nie.

Nee wat, dink Marius, haarsproei en skeerroom en skoenpolitoer is goed en wel, en hulle sal seker 'n paar pragtige ontploffings in die ou vrou se binnegoed veroorsaak, maar wat hy nou nodig het, is regte medisyne, regte pille en strope om die brousel murg en spiere te gee.

Marius tel die kastrol met moeite op en dra dit na die skuur langs die hoenderhok. Hy weet sy pa sal nie daar wees nie. Hy is op die land.

Marius kom by die stowwerige ou skuur in en sit die kastrol op die werkbank neer. Toe kyk hy na die medisynrak. Daar is vyf groot bottels. Twee is vol pille, twee is vol vloeistof en een vol poeier.

“Ek sal hulle almal gebruik,” besluit Marius. “Ouma het hulle nodig. Genugtig, het sy nie!”

Die eerste bottel bevat oranje poeier. Die etiket lui: vir
HOENDERS MET BOSE SWERE, PIEP, SEER BEKKE, MANK BENE,
HANITUS, EIERPROBLEME, BROEIERIGHEID OF VEERVERLIES.
SLEGS EEN LEPEL VOL BY ELKE EMMER VOER.

“Wel,” dink Marius hardop en gooi die hele bottel in, “die ou voël sal nie vere verloor as sy eers dit inhet nie.”

Die volgende bottel bevat omtrent vyfhonderd reusagtige pers pille. vir perde met hees kele, lui die etiket. die

AAN GET ASTE PERD MOET TWEE MAAL PER DAG EEN PIL SUIG.
“Ouma het miskien nie 'n hees keel nie,” dink Marius, “maar sy het bepaald 'n skerp tong. Miskien sal dit daarvoor help.” Al vyfhonderd reusagtige pers pille plons in die kas trol.

Die volgende bottel bevat 'n dik, gelerige vloeistof. vir
KOEIE, BULLE EN TOLLIES, lui die etiket. GENEES KOEIPOKKE,
KOEIBRANDSIEK, SLEGTE ASEM BY BULLE, OORPYN, TANDPYN,
KOPSEER, HOEFPYN, STERTPYN EN SEER UIERS.

“Die seurende ou vrou in die voorkamer het al daardie siektes,” sê Marius. “Sy moet die hele bottel kry.” Gorrelend en borrelend stroom die geel vloeistof in die kastrol, wat nou byna vol is.

Die volgende bottel bevat 'n helderrooi vloeistof. skaap—
dip, is die opskrif. vir skape met skaaprot en om van luise,
VLOOIE EN MYTE ONTSLAE TE RAAK. MENG EEN LEPEL IN VYF
LITER WATER EN SKIET DIT OOR DIE SKAAP. WAARSKUWING:

MOET DIE MENGSEL NIE STERKER MAAK NIE, ANDERS VAL DIE WOL UIT EN DAN IS DIE SKAAP NAKEND.

“Genugtig,” sê Marius, “ek voel sommer lus om dit in vyf liter water te gooi en die emmer oor Ouma te gaan uitskiet. Dit sal aardig wees om te sien hoe die vlooië en bosluise van haar afspring. Maar ek kan nie. Ek moenie. Sy sal dit maar moet drink.” Hy giet die helderrooi medisyne in die kastrol.

Die laaste bottel op die rak is vol bleekgroen pille. vark—

pille, lui die etiket. vir varke met porkenspiep, tere

TEPELS, STRAM STERTE EN SWYNSIEKTE. DIEN EEN PIL PER DAG

TOE. IN ERNSTIGE GEVALLE MAG TWEE PILLE GEGEE WORD,

MAAR MEER AS DIT SAL DIE VARK LAAT RUK EN ROL.

“Net reg vir daardie ellendige ou vrou in die huis,” sê Marius. “Sy’t ’n baie groot dosis nodig.” Hy laat rol ál die groen pille, honderde en honderde, in die kastrol.

Op die werkbank lê ’n ou stuk plank wat gebruik is om verf mee te roer. Marius tel dit op en begin sy koddige konkoksie roer. Die mengsel is so dik soos room en terwyl hy aanhoudend roer, verrys vele merkwaardige kleure uit die dieptes en smelt met mekaar saam: Pienk, blou, groen, geel en bruin.

Marius hou aan met roer tot alles goed gemeng is, maar

nou lê daar nog honderde ongesmelte pille op die boom van

die kastrol. En sy ma se pragtige poeierkwas dryf bo-op. “Ek sal dit moet kook,” sê Marius. “Net ’n paar minute op ’n warm stoof.” En met dié tel hy die swaar kastrol op en steier moeisaam daarmee terug huis toe.

Onderweg gaan hy by die motorhuis verby, en hy stap daarby in om te kyk of hy nog interessante dinge kan vind. Hy voeg die volgende by: ’n Halfliter masjienolie - om te sorg dat Ouma se enjin glad loop.

’n Bietjie teenvries middel - om te sorg dat haar ver-koeler in die winter nie vas-ys nie.

’n Handvol ghries-om haar krakende litte te smeer. Toe, terug na die kombuis.

5. The Cook-up

In the kitchen, George put the saucepan on the stove and turned up the gas flame

underneath it as high as it would go.

‘George!’ came the awful voice from the next room. ‘It’s time for my medicine!’

‘Not yet, Grandma,’ George called back. ‘There’s still twenty minutes before

eleven o’clock.’

‘What mischief are you up to in there now?’ Granny screeched. ‘I hear noises.’

George thought it best not to answer this one. He found a long wooden spoon in a

kitchen drawer and began stirring hard. The stuff in the pot got hotter and

hotter.

Soon the marvellous mixture began to froth and foam. A rich blue smoke, the

colour of peacocks, rose from the surface of the liquid, and a fiery fearsome

smell filled the kitchen. It made George choke and splutter. It was a smell

unlike any he had smelled before. It was a brutal and bewitching smell, spicy

and staggering, fierce and frenzied, full of wizardry and magic.

Whenever he got

a whiff of it up his nose, firecrackers went off in his skull and electric prickles ran along the backs of his legs. It was wonderful to stand there

stirring this amazing mixture and to watch it smoking blue and bubbling and

frothing and foaming as though it were alive. At one point, he could have sworn

he saw bright sparks flashing in the swirling foam.

And suddenly, George found himself dancing around the steaming pot, chanting

strange words that came into his head out of nowhere:

‘Fiery broth and witch’s brew

Foamy froth and riches blue

Fume and spume and spoondrift spray

Fizzle swizzle shout hooray
Watch it sloshing, swashing, sploshing
Hear it hissing, squishing, spissing
Grandma better start to pray.'

5. Op die stoof

In die kombuis sit Marius die kastrol op die stoof en draai die gasvlam so hoog as hy kan.

“Marius!” kom die aaklige stem uit die kamer langsaan. “Dit is tyd vir my medisyne.”

“Nog nie, Ouma,” roep Marius terug. “Daar’s nog twintig minute voor dit elfuur is.”

“Watter kattedwaad vang jy nou weer aan?” krys Ouma. “Ek hoor lawaai.”

Marius besluit om nie op hierdie vraag te antwoord nie. Hy kry ’n lang houtlepel in ’n kombuislaai en begin hard roer. Die goed in die kastrol word al warmer en warmer.

Weldra begin die wonderlike mengsel gis en skuim. ’n

Weelderige blou rook, die kleur van poue, styg uit die vloei stof op en ’n vurige en vreesaanjaende geur vul die kombuis. Dit laat Marius stik en sputter. Hy het nog nooit so iets geruik nie. Dit is ’n wrede, woeste, wonderlike geur, aromaties en aangrypend, diabolies en dol, vol towerny en goëlkunsies. Wanneer hy dit in sy neusgate opsnuif, ontplof klappers in sy skedel en elektriese prikkels dans op sy bene heen en weer. Dis wonderlik om hierdie merkwaardige mengsel te staan en roer en te kyk hoe dit gis en kook,, borrel en rook, skuim en spat, nes ’n lewende ding. In een stadium is hy seker hy sien helder vonkies in die dwarrelende skuim skitter.

En skielik, sonder dat hy weet waarom, begin Marius om die stomende pot dans, en sing vreemde woorde wat sommer vanself in sy kop kom: “Vurekuur en heksebrousel, sputterskuim en silwer blousel, slang se sis en draak se bloei, gorrel, borrel lepelsproei.

Kyk hoe pluim dit skuimend op,
seker is dit towersop.

En die drank is goed gebrou. Ouma, ons is reg vir jou.”

6. Brown Paint

George turned off the heat under the saucepan. He must leave plenty of time for it to cool down.

When all the steam and froth had gone away, he peered into the giant pan to see what colour the great medicine now was. It was a deep and brilliant blue.

‘It needs more brown in it,’ George said. ‘It simply must be brown or she’ll get suspicious.’

George ran outside and dashed into his father’s toolshed where all the paints

were kept. There was a row of cans on the shelf, all colours, black, green, red,

pink, white and brown. He reached for the can of brown. The label said simply

DARK BROWN GLOSS PAINT ONE QUART. He took a screwdriver and prised off the lid.

The can was three-quarters full. He rushed it back to the kitchen. He poured the

whole lot into the saucepan. The saucepan was now full to the brim. Very gently,

George stirred the paint into the mixture with the long wooden spoon. Ah-ha! It

was all turning brown! A lovely rich creamy brown!

‘Where’s that medicine of mine, boy?!’ came the voice from the living-room.

‘You’re forgetting me! You’re doing it on purpose! I shall tell your mother!’

‘I’m not forgetting you, Grandma,’ George called back. ‘I’m thinking of you all

the time. But there are still ten minutes to go.’

‘You’re a nasty little maggot!’ the voice screeched back. ‘You’re a lazy and

disobedient little worm, and you’re growing too fast.’

George fetched the bottle of Grandma’s real medicine from the sideboard. He took

out the cork and tipped it all down the sink. He then filled the bottle with his

own magic mixture by dipping a small jug into the saucepan and using

it as a
pourer. He replaced the cork.
Had it cooled down enough yet? Not quite. He held the bottle under
the cold tap
for a couple of minutes. The label came off in the wet but that didn't
matter.
He dried the bottle with a dishcloth.
All was now ready!
This was it!
The great moment had arrived!
'Medicine time, Grandma!' he called out.
'I should hope so, too,' came the grumpy reply.
The silver tablespoon in which the medicine was always given lay
ready on the
kitchen sideboard. George picked it up.
Holding the spoon in one hand and the bottle in the other, he
advanced into the
living-room.

6. Bruin verf

Marius doof die vlamme onder die kastrol uit. Dit moet nou eers afkoel.

Toe al die stoom en skuim verdwyn het, tuur hy in die reuse-kastrol om te kyk watter kleur die groot medisyne nou is. Dit is 'n diep, skitterende blou.

“Daar moet meer bruin inkom,” dink Marius. “Dit moet bruin wees, anders kry sy hond se gedagtes.”

Hy hardloop buitentoe en haas hom na die gereed-skapskuur, waar al die verf gehou word. Daar is 'n ry verf blikke op die rak, alle kleure, swart, groen, rooi, pienk, wit en bruin. Hy gryp die blik bruin. Die etiket lui: donkerbruin glansverf een liter. Met 'n skroewedraaier kry hy die de-ksel af. Die blik is driekwart vol. Hy jaag terug kombuis toe en gooi die hele klomp in die kastrol. Die kastrol is nou boordenstevol. Baie versigtig roer Marius die mengsel met die lang houtlepel. Aha! Dit begin bruin word, al bruiner, 'n pragtige, ryk, romerige bruin.

“Waa's daai medisyne van my, jou klein misbaksel?!” kom die stem uit die woonkamer. “Jy't vergeet van my. Jy doen dit aspris. Ek sal jou ma sê.”

“Ek vergeet nie vir Ouma nie, Ouma,” roep Marius terug.

“Ek dink aanmekaar aan Ouma. Maar dis nog maar tien voor elf.”

“Jy's 'n nare klein maaier!” kryns die stem. “Jy's 'n lui, ongehoorsame wurm, en jy groei te vinnig.”

Marius gaan haal Ouma se regte medisyne van die buffet. Hy trek die kurk uit en gooi dit in die sink af. Toe doop hy 'n beker in die towermengsel en giet dit in die medisynebottel. Hy kurk dit weer toe. Is dit al koel genoeg? Nie heeltemal nie. Hy hou dit 'n paar minute onder die koue kraan. Die etiket spoel af, maar dit maak nie saak nie. Hy droog die bottel met 'n vadoek af.

Nou is alles gereed!

Op julle merke!

Die groot oomblik het aangebreek!

“Tyd vir Ouma se medisyne, Ouma!” roep hy vrolik. “Ek sou so hoop,” kom die seurende antwoord.

Die silwer eetlepel waarin Ouma altyd haar medisyne kry, lê op die buffet in die kombuis gereed. Marius tel dit op.

Met die lepel in die een hand en die bottel in die ander, marsjeer hy by die woonkamer in.

7. Grandma Gets the Medicine

Grandma sat hunched in her chair by the window. The wicked little eyes followed

George closely as he crossed the room towards her.

‘You’re late,’ she snapped.

‘I don’t think I am, Grandma.’

‘Don’t interrupt me in the middle of a sentence!’ she shouted.

‘But you’d finished your sentence, Grandma.’

‘There you go again!’ she cried. ‘Always interrupting and arguing. You really

are a tiresome little boy. What’s the time?’

‘It’s exactly eleven o’clock, Grandma.’

‘You’re lying as usual. Stop talking so much and give me my medicine.

Shake the

bottle first. Then pour it into the spoon and make sure it’s a whole spoonful.’

‘Are you going to gulp it all down in one go?’ George asked her. ‘Or will you

sip it?’

‘What I do is none of your business,’ the old woman said. ‘Fill the spoon.’

As George removed the cork and began very slowly to pour the thick brown stuff

into the spoon, he couldn’t help thinking back upon all the mad and marvellous

things that had gone into the making of this crazy stuff — the shaving soap, the

hair remover, the dandruff cure, the automatic washing-machine powder, the flea

powder for dogs, the shoe polish, the black pepper, the horseradish sauce and

all the rest of them, not to mention the powerful animal pills and powders and

liquids ... and the brown paint.

‘Open your mouth wide, Grandma,’ he said, ‘and I’ll pop it in.’

The old hag opened her small wrinkled mouth, showing disgusting pale brown

teeth.

‘Here we go!’ George cried out. ‘Swallow it down!’ He pushed the spoon well into

her mouth and tipped the mixture down her throat. Then he stepped

back to watch
the result.

It was worth watching.

Grandma yelled 'Oweeeee!' and her whole body shot up whoosh into the air. It was

exactly as though someone had pushed an electric wire through the underneath of

her chair and switched on the current. Up she went like a jack-in-the-box ...

and she didn't come down ... she stayed there ... suspended in mid air ...

about two feet up ... still in a sitting position ... but rigid now ...

frozen ... quivering ... the eyes bulging ... the hair standing straight up on end.

'Is something wrong, Grandma?' George asked her politely. 'Are you all right?'

Suspended up there in space, the old girl was beyond speaking.

The shock that George's marvellous mixture had given her must have been

tremendous.

You'd have thought she'd swallowed a red-hot poker the way she took off from

that chair.

Then down she came again with a plop, back into her seat.

'Call the fire brigade!' she shouted suddenly. 'My stomach's on fire!'

'It's just the medicine, Grandma,' George said. 'It's good strong stuff.'

'Fire!' the old woman yelled. 'Fire in the basement! Get a bucket! Man the

hoses! Do something quick!'

'Cool it, Grandma,' George said. But he got a bit of a shock when he saw the

smoke coming out of her mouth and out of her nostrils. Clouds of black smoke

were coming out of her nose and blowing around the room.

'By golly, you really are on fire,' George said.

'Of course I'm on fire!' she yelled. 'I'll be burned to a crisp! I'll be fried to a frizzle! I'll be boiled like a beetroot!'

George ran into the kitchen and came back with a jug of water. 'Open your mouth,

Grandma!' he cried. He could hardly see her for the smoke, but he managed to

pour half a jugful down her throat. A sizzling sound, the kind you get if you

hold a hot frying-pan under a cold tap, came up from deep down in

Grandma's stomach. The old hag bucked and shied and snorted. She gasped and gurgled.

Spouts of water came shooting out of her. And the smoke cleared away.

'The fire's out,' George announced proudly. 'You'll be all right now, Grandma.'

'All right?' she yelled. 'Who's all right? There's jacky-jumpers in my tummy!

There's squiggles in my belly! There's bangers in my bottom!' She began

bouncing up and down in the chair. Quite obviously she was not very comfortable.

'You'll find it's doing you a lot of good, that medicine, Grandma,' George said.

'Good?' she screamed. 'Doing me good? It's killing me!'

Then she began to bulge.

She was swelling!

She was puffing up all over!

Someone was pumping her up, that's how it looked!

Was she going to explode?

Her face was turning from purple to green!

But wait! She had a puncture somewhere! George could hear the hiss of escaping

air. She stopped swelling. She was going down. She was slowly getting thinner

again, shrinking back and back slowly to her shrivelly old self.

'How's things, Grandma?' George said.

No answer.

Then a funny thing happened. Grandma's body gave a sudden sharp twist and a

sudden sharp jerk and she flipped herself clear out of the chair and landed

neatly on her two feet on the carpet.

'That's terrific, Grandma!' George cried. 'You haven't stood up like that for

years! Look at you! You're standing up all on your own and you're not even using

a stick!'

Grandma didn't even hear him. The frozen pop-eyed look was back with her again

now. She was miles away in another world.

Marvellous medicine, George told himself. He found it fascinating to stand there

watching what it was doing to the old hag. What next? he wondered.
He soon found out.

Suddenly she began to grow.

It was quite slow at first ... just a very gradual inching upwards ... up, up, up ... inch by inch ... getting taller and taller ... about an inch every few seconds ... and in the beginning George didn't notice it.

But when she had passed the five foot six mark and was going on up towards being

six feet tall, George gave a jump and shouted, 'Hey, Grandma! You're growing!

You're going up! Hang on, Grandma! You'd better stop now or you'll be hitting

the ceiling!'

But Grandma didn't stop.

It was a truly fantastic sight, this ancient scrawny old woman getting taller

and taller, longer and longer, thinner and thinner, as though she were a piece

of elastic being pulled upwards by invisible hands.

When the top of her head actually touched the ceiling, George thought she was

bound to stop.

But she didn't.

There was a sort of scrunching noise, and bits of plaster and cement came

raining down.

'Hadn't you better stop now, Grandma?' George said. 'Daddy's just had this whole

room repainted.'

But there was no stopping her now.

Soon, her head and shoulders had completely disappeared through the ceiling and

she was still going.

George dashed upstairs to his own bedroom and there she was coming up through

the floor like a mushroom.

'Whoopee!' she shouted, finding her voice at last. 'Hallelujah, here I come!'

'Steady on, Grandma,' George said.

'With a heigh-nonny-no and up we go!' she shouted. 'Just watch me grow!'

'This is my room,' George said. 'Look at the mess you're making.'

'Terrific medicine!' she cried. 'Give me some more!'

She's dotty as a doughnut, George thought.

‘Come on, boy! Give me some more!’ she yelled. ‘Dish it out! I’m slowing down!’

George was still clutching the medicine bottle in one hand and the spoon in the other. Oh well, he thought, why not? He poured out a second dose and popped it into her mouth.

‘Oweeee!’ she screamed and up she went again. Her feet were still on the floor downstairs in the living-room but her head was moving quickly towards the ceiling of the bedroom.

‘I’m on my way now, boy!’ she called down to George. ‘Just watch me go!’

‘That’s the attic above you, Grandma!’ George called out. ‘I’d keep out of

there! It’s full of bugs and bogles!’

Crash! The old girl’s head went through the ceiling as though it were butter.

George stood in his bedroom gazing at the shambles. There was a big hole in the

floor and another in the ceiling, and sticking up like a post between the two

was the middle part of Grandma. Her legs were in the room below, her head in the attic.

‘I’m still going!’ came the old screechy voice from up above. ‘Give me another

dose, my boy, and let’s go through the roof!’

‘No, Grandma, no!’ George called back. ‘You’re busting up the whole house!’

‘To heck with the house!’ she shouted. ‘I want some fresh air! I haven’t been

outside for twenty years!’

‘By golly, she is going through the roof!’ George told himself. He ran downstairs. He rushed out of the back door into the yard. It would be simply

awful, he thought, if she bashed up the roof as well. His father would be

furious. And he, George, would get the blame. He had made the medicine. He had

given her too much. ‘Don’t come through the roof, Grandma,’ he prayed. ‘Please don’t.’

7. Ouma kry die medisyne

Ouma sit in haar stoel by die venster. Haar bouse klein ogies volg Marius stip terwyl hy na haar aankom.

“Jy’s laat,” snou sy horn toe. “Ek dink nie so nie, Ouma.”

“Moet my nie in die middel van ’n sin onderbreek nie!”

skree sy.

“Maar Ouma het mos die sin voltooi, Ouma.”

“Luister net so! Daar doen jy dit weer!” skree sy. “Val ’n mens altyd in die rede of stry. Jy’s ’n vervelige klein snert. Hoe laat is dit?”

“Dis presies elfuur.”

“Jy lieg al weer. Moenie so baie praat nie en gee my my medisyne. Skud eers die bottel. Gooi dit dan in die lepel uit en maak seker dis ’n hele lepel vol.”

“Gaan Ouma dit alles gelyk insluk,” vra Marius, “of gaan Ouma dit bietjie-bietjie drink?”

“Dit traak jou nie,” sê die ou vrou. “Maak die lepel vol.” Marius trek die kurk uit en begin die dik, bruin brousel baie stadig in die lepel skink. Terwyl hy dit doen, dink hy terug aan al die mal, merkwaardige bestanddele van die mid-del - die skeerseep, die haarverwyderaar, die skilfermiddel, die wasoutomaat-poeier, die honde-vlooiopoeier, die skoenpolitoer, die risries, die peperwortelsous en die res, om nie te praat van die kragtige dierepille en -poeiers en -vloei-stowwe nie ... en die bruin verf.

“Maak Ouma se mond wyd oop, Ouma,” sê hy, “dan gooi ek dit in.”

Die ou vrou maak haar verrimpelde mondjie oop en wys afskuwelike bleek-bruin tande.

“Reg!” skree Marius. “Sluk dit af, Ouma!” Hy druk die lepel diep in haar mond en laat die mengsel in haar keel af-kantel. Toe tree hy terug om die gevolge te aanskou.

Die aanskou is die moeite werd.

Ouma gil “Oo-eee!” en haar hele liggaam skiet woerts in die lug. Dit is presies asof iemand ’n elektriese draad van onder deur haar stoel se setel gedruk en die krag aangeskakel het. Daar gaan sy soos’n staalveer in die lug op...ensykom nie af nie ... daar bly sy ... omtrent ’n meter bo haar stoel ... nog steeds in ’n sittende posisie ... maar nou stokstyf ... bevrore ... rillend ... met uitpeuloë ... en hare wat orent staan.

“Is daar fout, Ouma?” vra Marius hoflik. “Is daar iets verkeerd met Ouma?”

Van waar sy roerloos in die ruimte hang, vind die ou tannie dit onmoontlik om te praat.

Marius se merkwaardige mengsel moet haar ’n enorme

skok toegedien het.

Die manier waarop sy uit die stoel geskiet het, laat dit lyk asof sy 'n rooiwarm vuuryster ingesluk het.

Toe, met 'n plons, val sy weer in haar stoel terug.

“Roep die brandweer!” skree sy skielik. “My maag brand!”

“Dis maar net die medisyne, Ouma,” sê Marius. “Dis lek-ker sterk goed.”

“Brand!” roep die ou vrou. “Brand in die kelder! Kry 'n emmer! Bring die brandslang! Maak gou!”

“Kom, kom, Ouma,” sê Marius. Maar selfs hy skrik 'n bietjie toe hy rook by haar mond en haar neusgate sien uitkrul. Wolke swart rook dwarrel by haar neus uit en begin in die kamer versprei.

“Genugtig, Ouma is regtig aan die brand,” sê Marius.

“Natuurlik is ek aan die brand!” gil sy. “Ek gaan dood-brand! Ek gaan verkool word! Daar gaan net roet van my oorbly!”

Marius hardloop kombuis toe en kom met 'n beker water terug. “Maak Ouma se mond oop!” roep hy uit. Daar is so baie rook dat hy haar skaars kan sien, maar hy slaag wel daarin om sowat 'n halwe beker water in haar keelgat af te skiet. 'n Gesis, soos wanneer 'n mens 'n warm braaipan onder 'n koue kraan hou, styg diep uit Ouma se maag op. Die ou vrou bokspring en snork. Sy hyg en gorrel. Strale water skiet by haar uit. En die rook trek weg.

“Die brand is uit,” kondig Marius trots aan. “Dis nou alles in orde, Ouma.”

“In ordeV roep sy. “Wie's in orde? Daar's klappers in my pens! Daar's kieliegoed in my buik! Daar's knaldoppe in my agterstewe!” Sy begin in haar stoel op en af spring. Dit is heeltemal duidelik dat sy nie baie gerieflik voel nie.

“Ouma sal nog sien, die medisyne gaan Ouma gesond maak,” sê Marius.

“GesondT” gil sy. “Gesond? Dis besig om my dood te maak!”

Toe begin swel sy.

Haar hele liggaam blaas op!

Dit lyk asof iemand haar oppomp! Gaan sy ontplof?

Haar gesig, wat eers pers geword het, word nou groen!

Maar wag! Daar is êrens 'n lek! Marius kan lug hoor afblaas. Sy swel nie meer nie. Geleidelik word sy weer dun-ner, keer sy na haar verrimpelde self terug.

“Hoe gaan dit nou, Ouma?” vra Marius.

Geen antwoord nie.

Toe gebeur iets snaaks. Ouma se liggaam ruk skielik. Toe wip sy uit die stoel en beland netjies op haar twee voete op die tapyt.

“Dis ongelooflik, Ouma!” roep Marius. “Ouma het jare

laas só gestaan! Kyk net! Ouma staan alleen, en Ouma gebruik nie eers 'n kerie nie!”

Ouma hoor hom nie eens nie. Die bevrore blik in die bul—tende oë is terug. Sy is baie, baie ver daarvandaan, in 'n ander wêreld. Merkwaardige medisyne, dink Marius. Hy staan vasgenael na haar en kyk. Wat gaan nou gebeur? wonder hy.

Hy wag nie lank op 'n antwoord nie. Skielik begin sy groei.

Eers stadig ... baie stadig, sentimeter vir sentimeter ...

al hoër en hoër ... 'n sentimeter elke paar sekondes ... en in die begin merk Marius dit nie eens nie.

Maar toe sy by anderhalf meter verbytrek, goed op pad na 'n hoogte van twee meter, roep hy uit: “Haai, Ouma! Ouma groei! Ouma gaan boontoe! Wag, Ouma! Ouma moet nou maar ophou, anders stamp Ouma Ouma se kop teen die pla-fon!”

Maar Ouma hou nie op nie.

Dit is 'n werklik fabelagtige toneel: Die hoog bejaarde, seningrige ou vrou wat al langer en langer word, al hoër en hoër groei, al dunner en dunner rek asof sy 'n stuk gomlastiek is waaraan twee baie sterk mense trek.

Toe haar kop werklik aan die plafon raak, dink Marius sy gaan seker nou ophou.

Maar sy hou nie op nie.

Daar is 'n soort geknars, en stukkies pleister en sement val uit die plafon.

“Moet Ouma nie nou maar ophou nie, Ouma?” skree

Marius. “Pa het nou net die hele kamer laat verf.”

Maar niks kan haar nou keer nie.

Weldra het haar kop en skouers deur die plafon verdwyn. En sy groei nog steeds.

Marius nael by die trap op na sy eie slaapkamer en daar kom sy soos 'n paddastoel deur die vloer.

“Hooo-ee!” skree sy na die lang stilte. “Halleluja, hier kom ek!”

“Wag nou, Ouma,” sê Marius versigtig.

“Met 'n dop in my kop gaan ek op, op, op!” skree sy. “Kyk hoe trek ek!”

“Dis my kamer,” sê Marius. “Kyk hoe vuil maak Ouma dit.”

“Fantastiese medisyne!” skree sy. “Gee my nog!” Sy's so mal soos 'n haas, dink Marius.

“Kom boytjie, nog 'n bietjie!” skree sy. “Giet dit in! Ek groei nie meer so vinnig nie!”

Marius hou nog altyd die bottel in die een hand vas en die lepel in die ander. Nou ja, dink hy, hoekom nie? Hy skink nog 'n dosis en gooi dit in haar keel af.

“Hoo-ee!” gil sy, en daar gaat sy weer. Haar voete staan nog stewig op

die vloer van die woonkamer, maar haar kop is vinnig na die slaapkamer se plafon op pad.

“Daar’s nou nie meer aan my te keer nie, boytjie!” roep sy vir Marius. “Kyk net hoe trek ek!”

“Dis die solder wat nou voorlê, Ouma!” roep Marius vir haar. “Ek sou daar wegbly as ek Ouma was! Dis vol goggas en gorre!”

Boem! Kraak! Die ou vrou se kop skiet deur die plafon asof dit hotter is.

Marius bly in sy slaapkamer staan en kyk die verwoesting aan. Daar is ’n groot gat in die vloer en nog een in die plafon, en tussen die twee gate, soos ’n paal bo water, is Ouma se middelste gedeelte. Haar bene is in die woonkamer onder, haar kop in die solder.

“Ek is nog op pad, boytjie!” kom die krenterige ou stem van bo af.

“Gee my nog ’n dop, boytjie, dan gaan ons deur die dak!”

“Nee, Ouma, nee!” roep Marius. “Ouma breek die hele huis stukkend!”

“Na die joos met die huis!” skree sy. “Ek wil vars lug he! Ek was twintig jaar laas buite!”

“Gedorie, sy gaan deur die dak!” dink Marius. Hy nael by die trap af en jaag by die agterdeur uit, tot op die werf. Dit sal aaklig wees, dink hy, as sy die dak ook breek. Sy pa sal woedend wees. En hy, Marius, sal die skuld kry. Hy het die medisyne gemaak. Hy het haar te veel gegee. “Moenie deur die dak kom nie, Ouma,” bid hy al. “Moet tog asseblief nie.”

8. The Brown Hen

George stood in the farmyard looking up at the roof. The old farmhouse had a

fine roof of pale red tiles and tall chimneys.

There was no sign of Grandma. There was only a song-thrush sitting on one of the

chimney-pots, singing a song. The old wurzel's got stuck in the attic, George

thought. Thank goodness for that.

Suddenly a tile came clattering down from the roof and fell into the yard. The

song-thrush took off fast and flew away.

Then another tile came down.

Then half a dozen more.

And then, very slowly, like some weird monster rising up from the deep,

Grandma's head came through the roof ...

Then her scrawny neck ...

And the tops of her shoulders ...

'How'm I doing, boy!' she shouted. 'How's that for a bash up?'

'Don't you think you'd better stop now, Grandma?' George called out ...

'I have stopped!' she answered. 'I feel terrific! Didn't I tell you I had magic

powers! Didn't I warn you I had wizardry in the tips of my fingers! But you

wouldn't listen to me, would you? You wouldn't listen to your old Grandma!'

'You didn't do it, Grandma,' George shouted back to her. 'I did it! I made you a

new medicine!'

'A new medicine? You? What rubbish!' she yelled.

'I did! I did!' George shouted.

'You're lying as usual!' Grandma yelled. 'You're always lying!'

'I'm not lying, Grandma. I swear I'm not.'

The wrinkled old face high up on the roof stared down suspiciously at George.

'Are you telling me you actually made a new medicine all by yourself?' she

shouted.

'Yes, Grandma, all by myself.'

‘I don’t believe you,’ she answered. ‘But I’m very comfortable up here. Fetch me a cup of tea.’

A brown hen was pecking about in the yard close to where George was standing.

The hen gave him an idea. Quickly, he uncorked the medicine bottle and poured

some of the brown stuff into the spoon. ‘Watch this, Grandma!’ he shouted. He

crouched down, holding out the spoon to the hen.

‘Chicken,’ he said. ‘Chick-chick-chicken. Come here. Have some of this.’

Chickens are stupid birds, and very greedy. They think everything is food. This

one thought the spoon was full of corn. It hopped over. It put its head on one

side and looked at the spoon. ‘Come on, chicken,’ George said. ‘Good chicken.

Chick-chick-chick.’

The brown hen stretched out its neck towards the spoon and went peck. It got a

beakful of medicine.

The effect was electric.

‘Oweeee!’ shrieked the hen and it shot straight up into the air like a rocket. It

went as high as the house.

Then down it came again into the yard, splosh. And there it sat with its

feathers all sticking straight out from its body. There was a look of amazement

on its silly face. George stood watching it. Grandma up on the roof was watching

it, too.

The hen got to its feet. It was rather shaky. It was making funny gurgling

noises in its throat. Its beak was opening and shutting. It seemed like a pretty

sick hen.

‘You’ve done it in, you stupid boy!’ Grandma shouted. ‘That hen’s going to die!

Your father’ll be after you now! He’ll give you socks and serve you right!’

All of a sudden, black smoke started pouring out of the hen’s beak.

‘It’s on fire!’ Grandma yelled. ‘The hen’s on fire!’

George ran to the water-trough to get a bucket of water.
‘That hen’ll be roasted and ready for eating any moment!’ Grandma shouted.
George sloshed the bucket of water over the hen. There was a sizzling sound and
the smoke went away.
‘Old hen’s laid its last egg!’ Grandma shouted. ‘Hens don’t do any laying after
they’ve been on fire!’
Now that the fire was out, the hen seemed better. It stood up properly. It
flapped its wings. Then it crouched down low to the ground, as though getting
ready to jump. It did jump. It jumped high in the air and turned a complete
somersault, then landed back on its feet.
‘It’s a circus hen!’ Grandma shouted from the rooftop. ‘It’s a flipping acrobat!’
Now the hen began to grow.
George had been waiting for this to happen. ‘It’s growing!’ he yelled. ‘It’s
growing, Grandma! Look, it’s growing!’
Bigger and bigger ... taller and taller it grew. Soon the hen was four or five
times its normal size.
‘Can you see it, Grandma?!’ George shouted.
‘I can see it, boy!’ the old girl shouted back. ‘I’m watching it!’
George was hopping about from one foot to the other with excitement, pointing at
the enormous hen and shouting, ‘It’s had the magic medicine, Grandma, and it’s
growing just like you did!’
But there was a difference between the way the hen was growing and the way
Grandma grew. When Grandma grew taller and taller, she got thinner and thinner.
The hen didn’t. It stayed nice and plump all along.
Soon it was taller than George, but it didn’t stop there. It went right on
growing until it was about as big as a horse. Then it stopped.
‘Doesn’t it look marvellous, Grandma!’ George shouted.
‘It’s not as tall as me!’ Grandma sang out. ‘Compared with me, that hen is
titchy small! I am the tallest of them all!’

8. Die bruin hen

Marius staan op die plaaswerf en kyk na die dak. Die ou huis het 'n mooi dak: dowwe rooi teëls en hoë skoorstene.

Daar is geen teken van Ouma nie. Al wat hy sien, is 'n lys-ter wat op een van die skoorstene sit en sing. Die ou vrou het in die solder vasgesteek, dink Marius. Dank die vader.

Skielik tuimel 'n teël van die dak af en val in die werf stukkend. Die lyster vlieg vinnig weg.

Toe tuimel nóg 'n teël. Toe nog 'n halfdosyn.

En toe, baie stadig, soos die een of ander oermonster wat uit die oseaandieptes verrys, verskyn Ouma se kop deur die dak...

Toe haar dun nek ...

En die toppe van haar skouers ...

“Hoessit, boytjie!” skree sy. “Hoe vat djy daai?”

“Dink Ouma nie Ouma moet nou maar ophou nie?” roep

Marius ...

“Ek het opgehou!” sê sy. “Ek voel fantasties! Het ek jou nie gesê ek het towerkragte nie! Het ek jou nie gesê ek het goëlgoed in my vingertoppe nie! Maar jy wou mos nie na my luister nie! Jy wil mos nooit na jou ou Ouma luister nie!”

“Ouma het dit nie gedoen nie, Ouma,” skree Marius terug. “Efc het! Ek het vir Ouma nuwe medisyne gemaak!”

“Nuwe medisyne? Jy? Watter nonsens!” skree sy. “Ek het! Ek het!” skree Marius.

“Jy lieg al weer!” skree Ouma. “Soos altyd!” “Ek jok nie, Ouma. Ek sweer ek jok nie.”

Die verrimpelde ou gesig bo die dak tuur agterdogtig na Marius. “Wil jy my sê jy het stokalleen 'n nuwe medisyne gemaak?” skree sy.

“Ja, Ouma, stokalleen.”

“Ek glo jou nie,” antwoord sy. “Maar ek is baie gerieflik hier. Bring vir my 'n koppie tee.”

'n Bruin hen skrop naby Marius op die werf. Die hen gee hom 'n plan. Hy trek die prop uit die medisynebottel en skink 'n bietjie van die bruin brousel in die lepel. “Kyk, Ouma!”

roep hy. Toe hurk hy en hou die lepel na die hen uit.

“Kom hennetjie,” sê hy. “Kloek-kloek-kloek. Hier's vir jou iets om te drink.”

Hoenders is dom voëls, en baie gulsig. Hulle dink alles is kos. Dié een dink die lepel is vol mieliepitte. Sy spring nader.

Sy draai haar kop skeef en kyk na die lepel. “Kom, hennetjie,” sê Marius. “Soete hennetjie. Kloek-kloek-kloek.”

Die bruin hen rek haar nek tot by die lepel en pik. Sy kry 'n bekvot medisyne in.

Die gevolg is elektries.

“Hoo-ee!” gil die hen en skiet soos 'n vuurpyl in die lug op, so hoog soos die huis.

Toe begin die hen val. Al vinniger en vinniger, tot sy die werf met 'n boem tref. En daar bly sy sit. Haar vere staan reg-uit van haar lyf weg. Op die dom gesig is daar 'n uitdrukking van volslae ongeloof. Marius staan na die hen en kyk. Ouma hou dit net so stip dop.

Die hen sukkel orent, taamlik bewurig. Sy maak snaakse gorrelgeluide in haar keel. Haar bek gaan oop en toe. Dit lyk na 'n bra siek hen.

“Daai hen gaan lepel in die dak steek, jou miserabele

ploert!” skree Ouma. “Jy't haar vergiftig. Jou pa gaan jou kry. Hy gaan jou 'n afgedankste loesing gee, en goed so!”

Skielik begin swart rook by die hen se bek uitborrel.

“Sy's aan die brand!” skree Ouma. “Die hen is aan die brand!”

Marius hardloop na die watertrog om 'n emmer water te gaan haal.

“Daardie hen gaan binne vyf minute klaar gebraai en reg vir die tafel wees!” skree Ouma.

Marius skiet die emmer water oor die hen uit. Daar is 'n sissgeluid en die rook hou op.

“Ou hen het haar laaste eier gelê!” skree Ouma. “Henne lê nie meer na hulle aan die brand was nie!”

Noudat die brand uit is, lyk dit asof die hen beter voel. Sy staan behoorlik orent. Sy klap haar vlerke. Toe hurk sy laag op die grond asof sy wil spring. En sy spring. Sy spring hoog in die lug op, slaan bollemakiesie en kom weer op haar pote te lande.

“Dis 'n sirkushen!” skree Ouma van bo af. “Die skepsel is 'n bollemakiesie-arties!” Toe begin die hen groei.

Marius het verwag dit sal gebeur. “Sy groei!” skree hy. “Sy groei, Ouma! Kyk, sy groei!”

Groter en groter, langer en langer rek die hen. Spoedig is sy vier of vyf maal so groot soos tevore.

“Kan Ouma sien, Ouma?!” skree Marius.

“Ek sien dit, boytjie!” skree die ou vrou terug. “Ek kyk!” Marius dans opgewonde rond. “Die hen het die towermedisyne gedrink, Ouma, en sy groei nes Ouma gegroei het!”

Maar daar is 'n verskil tussen die manier waarop die hen gegroei het en die manier waarop Ouma gegroei het. Ouma het al dunner en dunner geword. Die hen nie. Sy bly lekker mollig en vet.

Gou-gou is die hen langer as Marius, maar sy hou nie daar op nie. Sy hou aan met groei tot sy omtrent so groot soos 'n perd is. Toe stop sy.

“Lyk sy nie wonderlik nie, Ouma!” roep Marius uit.

“Daai hen is nie so lank soos ek nie!” spog Ouma. “In ver-gelyking met my is daar die hen ’n kuiken! Ek is die langste van hulle almal!”

9. The Pig, the Bullocks, the Sheep, the Pony and the Nanny-goat

At that moment, George’s mother came back from shopping in the village. She drove her car into the yard and got out. She was carrying a bottle of milk in one hand and a bag of groceries in the other.

The first thing she saw was the gigantic brown hen towering over little George.

She dropped the bottle of milk.

Then Grandma started shouting at her from the rooftop, and when she looked up

and saw Grandma’s head sticking up through the tiles, she dropped the bag of

groceries.

‘How about that then, eh Mary?’ Grandma shouted. ‘I’ll bet you’ve never seen a

hen as big as that! That’s George’s giant hen, that is!’

‘But ... but ... but ...’ stammered George’s mother.

‘It’s George’s magic medicine!’ Grandma shouted. ‘We’ve both of us had it, the

hen and I!’

‘But how in the world did you get up on the roof?’ cried the mother.

‘I didn’t!’ cackled the old woman. ‘My feet are still standing on the floor in

the living-room!’

This was too much for George’s mother to understand. She just goggled and gaped.

She looked as though she was going to faint.

A second later, George’s father appeared. His name was Mr Killy Kranky. Mr

Kranky was a small man with bandy legs and a huge head. He was a kind father to

George, but he was not an easy person to live with because even the smallest

things got him all worked up and excited. The hen standing in the yard was

certainly not a small thing, and when Mr Kranky saw it he started jumping about

as though something was burning his feet. ‘Great heavens!’ he cried, waving his

arms. 'What's this? What's happened? Where did it come from? It's a giant hen!

Who did it?'

'I did,' George said.

'Look at me!' Grandma shouted from the rooftop. 'Never mind about the hen! What about me?'

Mr Kranky looked up and saw Grandma. 'Shut up, Grandma,' he said. It didn't seem

to surprise him that the old girl was sticking up through the roof. It was the

hen that excited him. He had never seen anything like it. But then who had?

'It's fantastic!' Mr Kranky shouted, dancing round and round. 'It's colossal!

It's gigantic! It's tremendous! It's a miracle! How did you do it, George?'

George started telling his father about the magic medicine. While he was doing

this, the big brown hen sat down in the middle of the yard and went cluck-cluck-cluck ... cluck-cluck-cluck-cluck-cluck.

Everyone stared at it.

When it stood up again, there was a brown egg lying there. The egg was the size of a football.

'That egg would make scrambled eggs for twenty people!' Mrs Kranky said.

'George!' Mr Kranky shouted. 'How much of this medicine have you got?'

'Lots,' George said. 'There's a big saucepanful in the kitchen, and this bottle

here's nearly full.'

'Come with me!' Mr Kranky yelled, grabbing George by the arm. 'Bring the

medicine! For years and years I've been trying to breed bigger and bigger

animals. Bigger bulls for beef. Bigger pigs for pork. Bigger sheep for mutton .

..'

They went to the pigsty first.

George gave a spoonful of medicine to the pig.

The pig blew smoke from its nose and jumped about all over the place. Then it

grew and grew.

In the end, it looked like this ...

They went to the herd of fine black bullocks that Mr Kranky was trying to fatten for the market.

George gave each of them some medicine, and this is what happened

...

Then the sheep ...

He gave some to his grey pony, Jack Frost ...

And finally, just for fun, he gave some to Alma, the nanny-goat ...

9. Die vark, die tollie, die skaap, die ponie en die boerbok

Op daardie oomblik kom Marius se ma van die dorp af terug. Sy ry by die werf in en klim uit. In die een hand het sy 'n bottel melk en in die ander 'n kardoos vol kruideniersware.

Die eerste ding wat sy sien, is die reusagtige bruin hen wat bo Marius uittroon. Sy laat val die bottel melk.

Toe begin Ouma van die dak af vir haar skree. Sy kyk op en sien Ouma se kop deur die teëls steek. Sy laat val die sak kruideniersware.

“Hoe vat dji daai, Maria?” skree Ouma. “Ek wed jy’t nog nooit so ’n groot hen gesien nie! Dis Marius se reuse-hen daai!”

“Maar ... maar ... maar ...” stamel Marius se ma.

“Dis Marius se towermedisynel!” skree Ouma. “Ons het dit albei gedrink, die hen en ek!”

“Maar hoe op aarde het Ma op die dak gekom?” vra mev.

Krompl.

“Ek het nie!” kekkel die ou vrou. “My voete staan nog altyd op die woonkamervloer!”

Hierdie berig gaan mev. Krompl se verstand te bowe. Sy staar haar ma met wyd oop oë aan. Haar mond hang oop. Dit lyk asof sy gaan flou word.

’n Oomblik later verskyn Marius se pa op die werf. Sy naam is mnr. Krommie Krompl. Mnr. Krompl is ’n klein mannetjie met bakbene en ’n tamaai kop. Hy is vir Marius ’n goeie pa, maar hy is nie ’n maklike mens om mee saam te leef nie, want selfs die kleinste kleinigheidjie maak hom opgewonde. Die hen wat op die werf staan, is bepaald geen kleinigheid nie en toe mnr. Krompl dit gewaar, begin hy rondspring asof iets sy voete brand. “Grote goeie genugtig!” skree hy en swaai sy arms. “Wat is dit? Wat het gebeur? Waar kom dit vandaan? Dis ’n tamaaie hen! Wie’t dit gedoen?”

“Ek het,” sê Marius.

“Kyk na my!” skree Ouma van bo af. “Vergeet van die hen! Wat van my?”

Mnr. Krompl kyk op en sien vir Ouma. “Bly stil, Ouma,” sê hy. Hy is blykbaar nie verbaas dat die ou tannie se kop deur die dak steek nie. Dit is die hen wat hom opgewonde maak. Hy het nog nooit so iets gesien nie. Maar wie het?

“Dis fantasties!” skree mnr. Krompl en dans in die rondte. “Dis kolossaal! Dis reusagtig! Dis merkwaardig! Dis ’n won-derwerk! Hoe’t jy dit reggekry, Marius?”

Marius begin van die heksebrousel vertel. Terwyl hy dit doen, gaan sit die groot bruin hen in die middel van die werf en maak kloek-kloek-kloek ... kloek-kloek-kloek.

Almal staar haar aan.

Toe die hen weer opstaan, lê daar 'n bruin eier op die grond. Die eier is so groot soos 'n rugbybal.

“Daar’s genoeg roereier vir twintig mense in daardie eier!”
sê mev. Krompl.

“Marius!” skree mnr. Krompl. “Hoeveel van die medisyne het jy?”

“Oorgenoeg,” sê Marius. “Daar’s ’n groot kastrol vol in die kombuis en dié bottel wat ek hier het, is byna vol.”

“Kom saam met my!” gil mnr. Krompl, en gryp Marius aan die arm. “Bring die medisyne! Jare en jare probeer ek al gro-ter en groter diere teel. Groter tollies vir steik. Groter varke vir groter wors. Groter skape vir tjops ...”

Hulle gaan eerste na die varkhok.

Marius gee vir die vark ’n lepelvol medisyne.

Die vark blaas rook uit sy neus en spring rond. Toe begin hy groei.

Op die ou end lyk hy so

Hulle stap na die troppie swart tollies wat mnr. Krompl vir die mark probeer vet voer.

Marius gee vir elkeen van sy medisyne en dis wat gebeur.

Toe die skape .

Hy gee vir sy grys ponie, Jan Tas, ’n lepelvol...

En op die ou end, net vir die grap, gee hy vir Alma, die boerbok, ’n stywe dop ...

10. A Crane for Grandma

Grandma, from high up on the rooftop, could see everything that was going on and she didn't like what she saw. She wanted to be the centre of attention and nobody was taking the slightest notice of her. George and Mr Kranky were running round and getting excited about the enormous animals. Mrs Kranky was washing up in the kitchen, and Grandma was all alone on the rooftop. 'Hey you!' she yelled. 'George! Get me a cup of tea this minute, you idle little beast!'

'Don't listen to the old goat,' Mr Kranky said. 'She's stuck where she is and a good thing, too.'

'But we can't leave her up there, dad,' George said. 'What if it rains?'

'George!' Grandma yelled. 'Oh, you horrible little boy! You disgusting little worm! Fetch me a cup of tea at once and a slice of currant cake!'

'We'll have to get her out, dad,' George said. 'She won't give us any peace if we don't.'

Mrs Kranky came outside and she agreed with George. 'She's my own mother,' she said.

'She's a pain in the neck,' Mr Kranky said.

'I don't care,' Mrs Kranky said. 'I'm not leaving my own mother sticking up through the roof for the rest of her life.'

So in the end, Mr Kranky telephoned the Crane Company and asked them to send their biggest crane out to the house at once.

The crane arrived one hour later. It was on wheels and there were two men inside it. The crane men climbed up on to the roof and put ropes under Grandma's arms.

Then she was lifted right up through the roof ...

In a way, the medicine had done Grandma good. It had not made her any less grumpy or bad-tempered, but it seemed to have cured all her aches

and pains, and
she was suddenly as frisky as a ferret. As soon as the crane had
lowered her to
the ground, she ran over to George's huge pony, Jack Frost, and
jumped on to his
back. This ancient old hag, who was now as tall as a house, then
galloped about
the farm on the gigantic pony, jumping over trees and sheds and
shouting, 'Out
of my way! Clear the decks! Stand back all you miserable midgets or
I'll trample
you to death!' and other silly things like that.
But because Grandma was now much too tall to get back into the
house, she had to
sleep that night in the hay-barn with the mice and the rats.

10. 'n Hyskraan vir Ouma

Van die dak af kan Ouma alles sien wat gebeur, en sy hou nie van wat
sy sien nie. Sy wil die middelpunt van aandag bly, en nou steur
niemand horn meer aan haar nie. Marius en mnr. Krompl hardloop die
hele werf plat, so opgewonde is hulle oor die enorme diere. Mev.
Krompl was die skottelgoed in die kombuis en Ouma is stokalleen op
die dak.

"Haai jy!" skree sy. "Marius! Bring vir my 'n koppie tee, dadelik, jou
lui klein lummel!"

"Moenie vir die ou bok luister nie!" skree mnr. Krompl. "Sy sit vas
waar sy nou is, en dis maar 'n goeie ding ook." "Maar ons kan haar nie
daar laat bly nie, Pa," sê Marius. "Sê nou dit reën?"

"Marius!" skree Ouma. "O, jou aaklige klein ploert! Jou veragtelike
wurm! Bring dadelik vir my 'n koppie tee en 'n stuk rosyntjiekoe!"

"Ons moet haar daar uitkry, Pa," sê Marius. "Sy sal ons geen rus of
duurte gee voor ons dit doen nie."

Toe kom mev. Krompl buitentoe en stem met Marius saam. "Sy's
daremy eie ma."

"Sy's 'n pyn in die nek," sê mnr. Krompl.

"Ek gee nie om nie," sê mev. Krompl. "Ek laat nie my eie ma vir die
res van haar lewe deur die dak steek nie."

Op die ou end bel mnr. Krompl toe die hyskraanmaat-skappy en vra
vir hulle om dadelik hul grootste kraan te stuur.

Die hyskraan daag 'n uur later op. Dit is op wiede en binne-in sit twee
mans. Die hyskraanmanne klim op die dak en sit 'n tou onder Ouma se
oksels. Toe lig hulle haar met die hyskraan uit...

Op 'n manier het die brousel Ouma goed gedoen. Dit het haar nie

minder klaerig of humeurig gemaak nie, maar al haar pyne en skete is skielik weg, en sy is so lewendig soos 'n terriër. Toe sy weer op vaste aarde staan, hardloop sy na Marius se tamaai ponie, Jan Tas, en spring op sy rug. Hierdie stokou tannie, nou so hoog soos 'n huis, klap die perd se nek met haar hand en daar gaat hulle! Dwarsoor die plaas galop sy en Jan Tas, oor bome en skure, en sy skree. “Gee pad voor! Staan weg! Hou julle lywe skaars, ellendige dwergies, of ek trap julle almal fyn en flenters!” en ander lawwighede. Maar omdat Ouma nou glad te lank is om in die huis te kom, moet sy daardie aand saam met die muise en die rotte in die hooiskuur slaap.

11. Mr Kranky's Great Idea

The next day, George's father came down to breakfast in a state of greater

excitement than ever. 'I've been awake all night thinking about it!' he cried.

'About what, dad?' George asked him.

'About your marvellous medicine, of course! We can't stop now, my boy! We must

start making more of it at once! More and more and more!'

The giant saucepan had been completely emptied the day before because there had

been so many sheep and pigs and cows and bullocks to be dosed.

'But why do we need more, dad?' George asked. 'We've done all our own animals

and we've made Grandma feel as frisky as a ferret even though she does have to

sleep in the barn.'

'My dear boy,' cried Mr Killy Kranky, 'we need barrels and barrels of it! Tons

and tons! Then we will sell it to every farmer in the world so that all of them

can have giant animals! We will build a Marvellous Medicine Factory and sell the

stuff in bottles at five pounds a time. We will become rich and you will become

famous!'

'But wait a minute, dad,' George said.

'There's no waiting!' cried Mr Kranky, working himself up so much that he put

butter in his coffee and milk on his toast. 'Don't you understand what this

tremendous invention of yours is going to do to the world! Nobody will ever go

hungry again!'

'Why won't they?' asked George.

'Because one giant cow will give fifty buckets of milk a day!' cried Mr Kranky,

waving his arms. 'One giant chicken will make a hundred fried chicken dinners,

and one giant pig will give you a thousand pork chops! It's tremendous, my dear

boy! It's fantastic! It'll change the world.'

'But wait a minute, dad,' George said again.

'Don't keep saying wait a minute!' shouted Mr Kranky. 'There isn't a minute to wait! We must get cracking at once!'

'Do calm down, my dear,' Mrs Kranky said from the other end of the table. 'And stop putting marmalade on your cornflakes.'

'The heck with my cornflakes!' cried Mr Kranky, leaping up from his chair. 'Come on, George! Let's get going! And the first thing we'll do is to make one more saucepanful as a tester.'

'But dad,' said little George. 'The trouble is ...'

'There won't be any trouble, my boy!' cried Mr Kranky. 'How can there possibly be any trouble? All you've got to do is put the same stuff into the saucepan as you did yesterday. And while you're doing it, I'll write down each and every item. That's how we'll get the magic recipe!'

'But dad,' George said. 'Please listen to me.'

'Why don't you listen to him,' Mrs Kranky said. 'The boy's trying to tell you something.'

But Mr Kranky was too excited to listen to anyone except himself. 'And then,' he cried, 'when the new mixture is ready, we'll test it out on an old hen just to make absolutely sure we've got it right, and after that we'll all shout hooray and build the giant factory!'

'But dad ...'

'Come on then, what is it you want to say?'

'I can't possibly remember all the hundreds of things I put into the saucepan to make the medicine,' George said.

'Of course you can, my dear boy,' cried Mr Kranky. 'I'll help you! I'll jog your memory! You'll get it in the end, you see if you don't! Now then, what was the very first thing you put in?'

'I went up to the bathroom first,' George said. 'I used a lot of things in the

bathroom and on mummy's dressing-table.'

'Come on, then!' cried Mr Killy Kranky. 'Up we go to the bathroom!' When they got there, they found, of course, a whole lot of empty tubes and empty aerosols and empty bottles. 'That's great,' said Mr Kranky. 'That tells us exactly what you used. If anything is empty, it means you used it.'

So Mr Kranky started making a list of everything that was empty in the bathroom.

Then they went to Mrs Kranky's dressing-table. 'A box of powder,' said Mr Kranky, writing it down. 'Helga's hairset. Flowers of Turnips perfume. Terrific.

This is going to be easy. Where did you go next?'

'To the laundry-room,' George said. 'But are you sure you haven't missed anything out up here, dad?'

'That's up to you, my boy,' Mr Kranky said. 'Have I?'

'I don't think so,' George said. So down they went to the laundry-room and once again Mr Kranky wrote down the names of all the empty bottles and cans. 'My goodness me, what a mass of stuff you used!' he cried. 'No wonder it did magic things! Is that the lot?'

'No, dad, it's not,' George said, and he led his father out to the shed where the animal medicines were kept and showed him the five big empty bottles up on the shelf. Mr Kranky wrote down all their names.

'Anything else?' Mr Kranky asked.

Little George scratched his head and thought and thought but he couldn't remember having put anything else in.

Mr Killy Kranky leapt into his car and drove down to the village and bought new bottles and tubes and cans of everything on his list. He then went to the vet and got a fresh supply of all the animal medicines George had used.

'Now show me how you did it, George,' he said. 'Come along. Show me exactly how you mixed them all together.'

Toe Marius se pa die volgende oggend kom ontbyt eet, is hy nog meer opgewonde as tevore. “Ek lê al die hele nag wakker soos ek daaroor dink!” roep hy uit.

“Waaroor, Pa?” vra Marius.

“Oor jou wonderlike medisyne, natuurlik! Ons kan nie nou laat slap lê nie, ou seun! Ons moet dadelik nóg daarvan begin maak. Nóg en nóg en nóg!”

Die reuse-kastrol is die vorige dag heeltemal leeggeskep omdat so baie skape en varke en koeie en tollies gedoseer moes word.

“Maar hoekom het ons nog nodig, Pa?” vra Marius. “Ons het al ál ons eie diere behandel en Ouma is so lewendig soos ’n jong merrie, al moet sy nou in die skuur slaap.”

“My liewe seun!” roep mnr. Krommie Krompl uit. “Ons moet vate en vate daarvan hê! Tonne en tonne! Dan verkoop ons dit aan elke boer in die wêreld sodat hulle almal reuse-diere kan hê! Ons bou ’n Merkwaardige Medisyne-Fabriek en verkoop die goed teen tien rand die bottel. Ons sal ryk word en jy sal beroemd wees!”

“Maar wag ’n oomblik, Pa,” sê Marius.

“Wag se voet!” roep mnr. Krompl uit, so opgewonde dat hy botter in sy koffie gooi en melk op sy brood smeer. “Ver-staan jy nie wat hierdie merkwaardige uitvinding van jou gaan beteken nie? Niemand in die wêreld gaan ooit weer hon-ger ly nie!”

“Hoekom nie?” vra Marius.

“Omdat een reuse-koei vyftig emmers melk per dag sal gee!” roep mnr. Krompl uit en swaai sy arms heen en weer. “Een reuse-hoender sal genoeg braaihoender vir honderd mense wees en een reuse-vark sal ’n duisend varktjops op-lewer! Dis ongelooflik, ou seun! Dis fantasties! Dit sal die wêreld verander.”

“Maar wag ’n oomblik, pa,” sê Marius weer.

“Moenie aanhou sê ek moet wag nie!” skree mnr. Krompl. “Daar’s nie ’n oomblik om te wag nie! Ons moet dadelik aan die werk spring!”

“Bly tog kalm, skat,” sê mev. Krompl, wat oorkant horn sit. “En moenie marmelade op jou vlokkies sit nie.”

“Na die joos met my vlokkies!” skree mnr. Krompl, en spring op. “Kom, Marius! Ons moet begin! Die eerste ding om te doen is om nog ’n kastrol vol te maak, as ’n toets.”

“Maar Pa,” sê Marius. “Die moeilikheid is ...”

“Daar gaan nie moeilikheid wees nie, ou seun!” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Hoe kan daar nou moeilikheid wees? Al wat jy hoef te doen, is om dieselfde goed in die kastrol te sit as die ander dag. En terwyl jy dit doen, skryf ek elke item neer. Dan het ons die towerresep!”

“Maar Pa,” sê Marius. “Luister tog asseblief na my.”

“Hoekom luister jy nie na hom nie?” vra mev. Krompl. “Die seun

probeer jou iets vertel.”

Maar mnr. Krompl is te opgewonde om na iemand be—

halwe homself te luister. “En dan,” roep hy uit, “asdie nuwe mengsel reg is, toets ons dit weer op ’n ou hen uit net om seker te maak dat dit korrek is, en dan skree ons almal hiep-hiep-hoerê en ons bou die groot fabriek!”

“Maar Pa ... ”

“Kom nou, wat wil jy sê?”

“Ek kan mos onmoontlik al die honderde goed wat ek in die kastrol gegooi het, onthou,” sê Marius.

“Natuurlik kan jy, ou seun,” roep mnr. Krompl. “Ek sal jou help! Ek sal jou geheue prikkel! Jy sal dit op die ou end regkry, jy sal sien! Nou ja kom, wat is die eerste ding wat jy ingesit het?”

“Ek is eers badkamer toe,” sê Marius. “Ek het ’n klomp goed in die badkamer en op Ma se kleedtafel gebruik.”

“Maar nou kom!” roep mnr. Krommie Krompl uit. “Badkamer toe!”

Toe hulle daar kom, kry hulle natuurlik ’n hele klomp leë buise en leë aerosols en leë bottels. “Skitterend,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Dit was presies wat jy gebruik het. As iets leeg is, beteken dit dat jy dit gebruik het.”

Mnr. Krompl begin ’n lys maak van alles wat in die bad kamer leeg is. Toe gaan hulle na mev. Krompl se kleedtafel. “’n Doos poeier,” sê mnr. Krompl en skryf dit neer. “Helga se Haarset. Eau de Pong. Skitterend. Dit gaan maklik wees. En daarna?”

“Na die waskamer,” sê Marius. “Maar is Pa seker Pa het nie iets uitgelaat nie?”

“Dit hang van jou af, ou seun,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Het ek?”

“Ek dink nie so nie,” sê Marius. Hulle gaan na die was kamer en weer skryf mnr. Krompl die name van al die leë bottels en blikke neer. “Genugtig, maar jy’t ’n klomp goed gebruik!” roep hy uit. “G’n wonder dit het so kragtig gewerk nie! Is dit al?”

“Nee, Pa, nog nie,” sê Marius en neem sy Pa na die skuur waar die dieremedisyne gehou word. Op die rak staan die vyf groot leë flesse. Mnr. Krompl skryf al die name neer.

“Nog iets?” vra mnr. Krompl.

Marius krap sy kop en dink diep na, maar hy kan aan niks anders dink nie.

Mnr. Krommie Krompl spring in sy motor, ry dorp toe en koop alles wat hy op sy lys het. Toe gaan hy na die veearts en kry ’n vars voorraad van al die dieremedisyne wat Marius gebruik het.

“Wys nou vir my hoe jy dit gedoen het, Marius,” sê hy.

“Kom. Wys my presies hoe jy alles gemeng het.”

12. Marvellous Medicine Number Two

They were in the kitchen now and the big saucepan was on the stove. All the things Mr Kranky had bought were lined up near the sink. 'Come along, my boy!' cried Mr Killy Kranky. 'Which one did you put in first?' 'This one,' George said. 'Goldengloss Hair Shampoo.' He emptied the bottle into the pan. 'Now the toothpaste,' George went on ... 'And the shaving soap ... and the face cream ... and the nail varnish ...' 'Keep at it, my boy!' cried Mr Kranky, dancing round the kitchen. 'Keep putting them in! Don't stop! Don't pause! Don't hesitate! It's a pleasure, my dear fellow, to watch you work!' One by one, George poured and squeezed the things into the saucepan. With everything so close at hand, the whole job didn't take him more than ten minutes. But when it was all done, the saucepan didn't somehow seem to be quite as full as it had been the first time. 'Now what did you do?' cried Mr Kranky. 'Did you stir it?' 'I boiled it,' George said. 'But not for long. And I stirred it as well.' So Mr Kranky lit the gas under the saucepan and George stirred the mixture with the same long wooden spoon he had used before. 'It's not brown enough,' George said. 'Wait a minute! I know what I've forgotten!' 'What?' cried Mr Kranky. 'Tell me, quick! Because if we've forgotten even one tiny thing, then it won't work! At least not in the same way.' 'A quart of brown gloss paint,' George said. 'That's what I've forgotten.' Mr Killy Kranky shot out of the house and into his car like a rocket. He sped down to the village and bought the paint and rushed back again. He opened the can in the kitchen and handed it to George. George poured the paint

into the
saucepan.

‘Ah-ha, that’s better,’ George said. ‘That’s more like the right colour.’
‘It’s boiling!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘It’s boiling and bubbling, George! Is it
ready
yet?’

‘It’s ready,’ George said. ‘At least I hope it is.’

‘Right!’ shouted Mr Kranky, hopping about. ‘Let’s test it! Let’s give
some to a
chicken!’

‘My heavens alive, why don’t you calm down a bit?’ Mrs Kranky said,
coming into
the kitchen.

‘Calm down?’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘You expect me to calm down and here
we are mixing

up the greatest medicine ever discovered in the history of the world!
Come

along, George! Dip a cupful out of the saucepan and get a spoon and
we’ll give

some to a chicken just to make absolutely certain we’ve got the
correct
mixture.’

Outside in the yard, there were several chickens that hadn’t had any
of George’s

Marvellous Medicine Number One. They were pecking about in the
dirt in that

silly way chickens do.

George crouched down, holding out a spoonful of Marvellous
Medicine Number Two.

‘Come on, chicken,’ he said. ‘Good chicken. Chick-chick-chick.’

A white chicken with black specks on its feathers looked up at George.
It walked

over to the spoon and went peck.

The effect that Medicine Number Two had on this chicken was not
quite the same

as the effect produced by Medicine Number One, but it was very
interesting.

‘Whooosh!’ shrieked the chicken and it shot six feet up in the air and
came down

again. Then sparks came flying out of its beak, bright yellow sparks of
fire, as

though someone was sharpening a knife on a grindstone inside its
tummy. Then its

legs began to grow longer. Its body stayed the same size but the two

thin yellow
legs got longer and longer and longer ... and longer still ...
‘What’s happening to it?’ cried Mr Killy Kranky.
‘Something’s wrong,’ George said.
The legs went on growing and the more they grew, the higher up into
the air went
the chicken’s body. When the legs were about fifteen feet long, they
stopped
growing. The chicken looked perfectly absurd with its long long legs
and its
ordinary little body perched high up on top. It was like a chicken on
stilts.
‘Oh my sainted aunts!’ cried Mr Killy Kranky. ‘We’ve got it wrong!
This
chicken’s no good to anybody! It’s all legs! No one wants chickens’
legs!’
‘I must have left something out,’ George said.
‘I know you left something out!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘Think, boy, think!
What was
it you left out?’
‘I’ve got it!’ said George.
‘What was it, quick?’
‘Flea powder for dogs,’ George said.
‘You mean you put flea powder in the first one?’
‘Yes, dad, I did. A whole carton of it.’
‘Then that’s the answer!’
‘Wait a minute,’ said George. ‘Did we have brown shoe polish on our
list?’
‘We did not,’ said Mr Kranky.
‘I used that, too,’ said George.
‘Well, no wonder it went wrong,’ said Mr Kranky. He was already
running to his
car, and soon he was heading down the village to buy more flea
powder and more
shoe polish.

12. Merkwaardige Medisyne Twee

Hulle is nou in die kombuis en die groot kastrol is op die stoof. Al die goed wat mnr. Krompl gekoop het, staan in rye naby die opwasbak.

“Kom, ou seun!” roep mnr. Krommie Krompl uit. “Watter een het jy eerste ingesit?”

“Die een,” sê Marius. “Goueglans-haarsjampoe.” Hy ledig die bottel in die kastrol.

“Nou die tandepasta,” sê Marius ... “En die skeerseep ... en die gesigroom ... en die naellak ...”

“Hou so aan, ou seun!” roep mnr. Krompl uit en dans in die kombuis rond. “Gooi hulle in! Giet hulle in! Suipt hulle in! Moenie ophou nie! Moenie aarsel nie! Dis ’n plesier, my liewe kêrel, om jou aan die werk te sien!”

Een vir een giet, druk en krap Marius die bestanddele in die kastrol uit. Noudat alles byderhand is, neem die hele taak hom skaars tien minute, maar toe alles in is, lyk die kastrol nie heeltemal so vol soos die eerste keer nie.

“En toe, wat het jy toe gedoen?” vra mnr. Krompl. “Het jy dit geroer?”

“Ek het dit gekook,” sê Marius. “Maar nie vir lank nie. En geroer ook.”

Toe steek mnr. Krompl die gasvlam onder die kastrol aan en Marius roer die brousel met dieselfde lang houtlepel wat hy tevore gebruik het. “Dis nie bruin genoeg nie,” sê Marius. “Wag ’n bietjie! Ek weet wat ek vergeet het!”

“Wat?” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Sê my gou! Want as ons die kleinste titseltjie vergeet het, sal dit nie werk nie! Of ten minste nie op dieselfde manier nie.”

“’n Liter bruin glansverf,” sê Marius. “Dis wat ek vergeet het.”

Soos ’n vuurpyl jaag mnr. Krommie Krompl by die huis uit en spring in sy motor. Hy ry oop en toe na die dorpie, koop die verf en jaag weer terug. In die kombuis maak hy die blik oop en gee dit vir Marius. Marius gooi die verf in die kastrol. “Aha, dis beter,” sê Marius. “Dit lyk meer na die regte kleur.”

“Dit kook!” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Dit kook en borrel, Marius! Is dit reg?”

“Dis reg,” sê Marius. “Of liewer, ek hoop so.”

“Reg!” roep mnr. Krompl en spring op een been rond. “Kom ons toets dit uit! Kry ’n hoender!”

“Liewe land, hoekom probeer jy nie ’n bietjie kalmer bly nie?” vra mev. Krompl en kom die kombuis in.

“Kalmerbly?” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Verwag jy ek moet kalm bly

terwyl ons besig is om die grootste medisyne in die geskiedenis van die wêreld te meng? Kom, Marius! Bring 'n koppievol en kry 'n lepel, dan gee ons dit vir 'n hoender net om seker te maak dat die mengsel reg is.”

Buite op die werf is daar verskeie hoenders wat nog nie van Marius se merkwaardige medisyne nommer een gekry het nie. Hulle skrop in die grond soos hoenders maar maak.

Marius hurk en hou 'n lepelvol brousel na hulle uit. “Kom, hoendertjies,” sê hy. “Soete kiepies. Kloek-kloek-kloek.”

'n Wit hoender met swart spikkels op haar vere, kyk op. Sy stap na die lepel en pik.

Die uitwerking van medisyne nommer twee op dié hoender is nie heeltemal dieselfde as die uitwerking van brousel nommer een nie, maar dit is baie interessant. “Whoesj!” gil die hoender, spring twee meter in die lug op en kom weër af. Toe begin vonke uit haar bek vlieg, heldergeel vonke vuur, asof iemand 'n mes op 'n slypsteen in haar maag skerpmaak. Toe begin haar bene groei. Die lyf bly dieselfde grootte, maar die twee dun geel bene word langer en langer en langer... en nog langer.

“Wat gaan nou aan?” roep mnr. Krommie Krompl uit.

“Iets het skeef geloop,” sê Marius.

Die bene groei verder en hoe langer hulle groei, hoe hoër gaan die hoender se lyf in die lug op. Toe die bene byna vyf meter lank is, kom die hoender tot stilstand. Die hoender lyk belanglik, 'n gewone ou hoenderlyfie bo-op die enorme lang bene. Sy lyk soos 'n hen op stelte.

“O, my heerlijkheid!” roep mnr. Krommie Krompl uit. “Dis alles verkeerd! Dié hoender gaan niemand help nie! Dis die ene pote! Niemand wil hoenderpote hê nie!”

“Ek het seker iets uitgelaat,” sê Marius.

“Ek weet jy't iets uitgelaat!” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Dink, seun, dink! Wat het jy uitgelaat?”

“Ek weet!” sê Marius. “Wat was dit? Gou!”

“Vlooiopoeier vir honde,” sê Marius.

“Jy meen jy het vlooiopoeier in die eerste een gesit?” “Ja, Pa, ek het. 'n Hele karton vol.”

“Dan is dit die antwoord!”

“Wag 'n oomblik,” sê Marius. “Het ons bruin skoepolitoer op die lys gehad?”

“Ons het nie,” sê mnr. Krompl.

“Ek het dit ook gebruik,” sê Marius.

“Geen wonder dit het skeef geloop nie,” sê mnr. Krompl-Hy spring weg, hardloop na sy kar en jaag dorp toe om nog vlooiopoeier en skoepolitoer te koop.

13. Marvellous Medicine Number Three

‘Here it is!’ cried Mr Killy Kranky, rushing into the kitchen. ‘One carton of

flea powder for dogs and one tin of brown shoe-polish!’

George poured the flea powder into the giant saucepan. Then he scooped the

shoe-polish out of its tin and added that as well.

‘Stir it up, George!’ shouted Mr Kranky. ‘Give it another boil! We’ve got it

this time! I’ll bet we’ve got it!’

After Marvellous Medicine Number Three had been boiled and stirred, George took

a cupful of it out into the yard to try it on another chicken. Mr Kranky ran

after him, flapping his arms and hopping with excitement. ‘Come and watch this

one!’ he called out to Mrs Kranky. ‘Come and watch us turning an ordinary

chicken into a lovely great big one that lays eggs as large as footballs!’

‘I hope you do better than last time,’ said Mrs Kranky, following them out.

‘Come on, chicken,’ said George, holding out a spoonful of Medicine Number

Three. ‘Good chicken. Chick-chick-chick-chick-chick. Have some of this lovely medicine.’

A magnificent black cockerel with a scarlet comb came stepping over. The

cockerel looked at the spoon and it went peck.

‘Cock-a-doodle-do!’ squawked the cockerel, shooting up into the air and coming down again.

‘Watch him now!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘Watch him grow! Any moment he’s going to start getting bigger and bigger!’

Mr Killy Kranky, Mrs Kranky and little George stood in the yard staring at the

black cockerel. The cockerel stood quite still. It looked as though it had a

headache.

‘What’s happening to its neck?’ Mrs Kranky said.

‘It’s getting longer,’ George said.

‘I’ll say it’s getting longer,’ Mrs Kranky said.

Mr Kranky, for once, said nothing.

‘Last time it was the legs,’ Mrs Kranky said. ‘Now it’s the neck. Who wants a

chicken with a long neck? You can’t eat a chicken’s neck.’

It was an extraordinary sight. The cockerel’s body hadn’t grown at all.

But the

neck was now about six feet long.

‘All right, George,’ Mr Kranky said. ‘What else have you forgotten?’

‘I don’t know,’ George said.

‘Oh yes you do,’ Mr Kranky said. ‘Come along, boy, think. There’s probably just

one vital thing missing and you’ve got to remember it.’

I put in some engine oil from the garage,’ George said. ‘Did you have that on

your list?’

‘Eureka!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘That’s the answer! How much did you put in?’

‘Half a pint,’ George said.

Mr Kranky ran to the garage and found another half pint of oil. ‘And some

anti-freeze,’ George called after him. ‘I sloshed in a bit of anti-freeze.’

13. Merkwaardige Medisyne Drie

“Hier!” roep mnr. Krommie Krompl uit en storm by die kombuis in. “Een doos vlooiopoeier vir honde en een blik bruin skoenspolitoer!”

Marius voeg die twee bestanddele by.

“Roer dit goed, Marius!” roep mnr. Krompl. “En kook dit nog ’n slag! Dié keer het ons dit! Ek wed jou!”

Ná brousel nommer drie geroer en gekook is, skep Marius

’n koppievol en neem dit werf toe om dit op nog ’n hoender te beproef. Mnr. Krompl hardloop agterna. Hy swaai sy arms en spring opgewonde rond. “Kom kyk dié enel!” roep hy na mev. Krompl. “Kom kyk hoe verander ’n gewone hoender in ’n pragtige reuse hoender wat eiers so groot soos rugbyballe lê!”

“Ek hoop julle vaar beter as die vorige keer,” sê mev. Krompl en volg hulle.

“Kom hoendertjie,” sê Marius en hou ’n lepelvol brousel nommer drie uit. “Soete hoender. Kloek-kloek-kloek. Pro beer ’n bietjie van dié lieflike medisyne.”

’n Manjifieke swart haan met ’n skarlaken kam kom nader. Die haan bekyk die lepel en pik.

“Koelie-koelie-koo!” krysvan die haan, skiet in die lug op en kom weer af.

“Hou hom dop!” roep mnr. Krompl. “Kyk hoe groei hy! Hy gaan nou elke oomblik begin!”

Mnr. Krommie Krompl, mev. Krompl en Marius staan op die werf en staar die swart haan aan. Die haan staan botstil. Dit lyk asof hy kopseer het.

“Wat gaan met sy nek aan?” vra mev. Krompl. “Dit word langer,” sê Marius.

“Dit kan jy weer sê,” sê mev. Krompl.

Hierdie een keer sê mnr. Krompl niks.

“Laaskeer was dit die bene,” sê mev. Krompl. “Nou’s dit die nek. Wie wil ’n hoender met ’n lang nek hê? Al wat jy van ’n hoendernek kan maak, is sop.”

Dit is ’n merkwaardige skouspel. Die haan se liggaam groei hoegenaamd nie, maar die nek is nou byna twee meter lank. “Goed, Marius,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Wat het jy nog ver geet?”

“Ek weet nie,” sê Marius.

“O ja, jy weet,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Kom kêrel, dink. Daar ontbreek miskien net een lewensnoodsaaklike ding, en jy moet dit onthou.”

“Masjienolie uit die garage,” sê Marius. “Was dit op die

lys?”

“Eureka!” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Dis die antwoord. Hoeveel?”

“’n Halwe liter,” sê Marius.

Mnr. Krompl hardloop na die motorhuis en kry nog ’n halwe liter olie.

“En ’n bietjie teenvriesmiddel,” roep Marius agterna. “Net so ’n bietjie.”

14. Marvellous Medicine Number Four

Back in the kitchen once again, George, with Mr Kranky watching him anxiously, tipped half a pint of engine oil and some anti-freeze into the giant saucepan.

‘Boil it up again!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘Boil it and stir it!’

George boiled it and stirred it.

‘You’ll never get it right,’ said Mrs Kranky. ‘Don’t forget you don’t just have

to have the same things but you’ve got to have exactly the same amounts of those

things. And how can you possibly do that?’

‘You keep out of this!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘We’re doing fine! We’ve got it this

time, you see if we haven’t!’

This was George’s Marvellous Medicine Number Four, and when it had boiled for a

couple of minutes, George once again carried a cupful of it out into the yard.

Mr Kranky ran after him. Mrs Kranky followed more slowly. ‘You’re going to have

some mighty queer chickens around here if you go on like this,’ she said.

‘Dish it out, George!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘Give a spoonful to that one over

there!’ He pointed to a brown hen.

George knelt down and held out the spoon with the new medicine in it.

‘Chick-chick,’ he said. ‘Try some of this.’

The brown hen walked over and looked at the spoon. Then it went peck.

‘Owch!’ it said. Then a funny whistling noise came out of its beak.

‘Watch it grow!’ shouted Mr Kranky.

‘Don’t be too sure,’ said Mrs Kranky. ‘Why is it whistling like that?’

‘Keep quiet, woman!’ cried Mr Kranky. ‘Give it a chance!’

They stood there staring at the brown hen.

‘It’s getting smaller,’ George said. ‘Look at it, dad. It’s shrinking.’

And indeed it was. In less than a minute, the hen had shrunk so much it was no

bigger than a new-hatched chick. It looked ridiculous.

14. Merkwaardige Medisyne Vier

Hulle is weer in die kombuis. Terwyl mnr. Krompl toekyk, gooi Marius 'n halfliter masjienolie en 'n bietjie teenvriesmiddel in die groot kastrol.

“Kook dit weer!” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Kook dit en roer dit!”

Marius kook dit en roer dit.

“Jy sal dit nooit regkry nie,” sê mev. Krompl. “Onthou, jy moenie alleen die regte bestanddele hê nie, maar ook die presiese hoeveelhede van elke bestanddeel. En hoe op aarde kry jy dit reg?”

“Moenie jou neus kom insteek nie!” roep mnr. Krompl uit. “Ons vorder fluks. Dié keer het ons dit, hou ons dop!”

Wat nou in die kastrol is, is Marius se brousel nommer vier, en nadat dit 'n paar minute gekook het, neem Marius nog-maals 'n koppievol na die werf. Mnr. Krompl hardloop agter hom aan. Mev. Krompl volg hulle stadiger. “Julie gaan 'n klomp baie rare hoenders hier rond hê as julle so aangaan,” sê sy.

“Kom nou, Marius!” roep mnr. Krompl. “Gee vir daardie een 'n lepelvol!” Hy wys na 'n bruin hen.

Marius hurk en hou die lepel uit. “Kloek-kloek,” sê hy.

“Probeer 'n bietjie hiervan.”

Die bruin hen kom nader en kyk na die lepel. Toe pik sy. “Aitsj!” sê sy. Toe kom 'n snaakse fluitgeluid uit haar bek. “Sy gaan groei!” roep mnr. Krompl.

“Moenie so seker wees nie,” sê mev. Krompl. “Hoekom fluit sy so?”

“Bly stil, vroumens!” roep mnr. Krompl. “Gee kans!” Al drie staan die bruin hen en aankyk.

“Dit word kleiner,” sê Marius. “Kyk, Pa, die hen krimp!”

En dit is ook so. In minder as 'n minuut het die hen soveel gekrimp dat dit nou niks groter as 'n pasgebore kuiken is nie. Dit lyk belaglik.

15. Goodbye Grandma

‘There’s still something you’ve left out,’ Mr Kranky said.

‘I can’t think what it could be,’ George said.

‘Give it up,’ Mrs Kranky said. ‘Pack it in. You’ll never get it right.’

Mr Kranky looked very forlorn.

George looked pretty fed up, too. He was still kneeling on the ground with the

spoon in one hand and the cup full of medicine in the other. The ridiculous tiny

brown hen was walking slowly away.

At that point, Grandma came striding into the yard. From her enormous height,

she glared down at the three people below her and she shouted, ‘What’s going on

around here? Why hasn’t anyone brought me my morning cup of tea?

It’s bad enough

having to sleep in the yard with the rats and mice but I’ll be blowed if I’m

going to starve as well! No tea! No eggs and bacon! No buttered toast!’

‘I’m sorry, mother,’ Mrs Kranky said. ‘We’ve been terribly busy. I’ll get you

something right away.’

‘Let George get it, the lazy little brute!’ Grandma shouted.

Just then, the old woman spotted the cup in George’s hand. She bent down and

peered into it. She saw that it was full of brown liquid. It looked very much

like tea. ‘Ho-ho!’ she cried. ‘Ha-ha! So that’s your little game, is it! You look after yourself all right, don’t you! You make quite sure you’ve got a nice

cup of morning tea! But you didn’t think to bring one to your poor old Grandma!

I always knew you were a selfish pig!’

‘No, Grandma,’ George said. ‘This isn’t ...’

‘Don’t lie to me, boy!’ the enormous old hag shouted. ‘Pass it up here this

minute!’

‘No!’ cried Mrs Kranky. ‘No, mother, don’t! That’s not for you!’

‘Now you’re against me, too!’ shouted Grandma. ‘My own daughter trying to stop

me having my breakfast! Trying to starve me out!’

Mr Kranky looked up at the horrid old woman and he smiled sweetly. 'Of course it's for you, Grandma,' he said. 'You take it and drink it while it's nice and hot.'

'Don't think I won't,' Grandma said, bending down from her great height and reaching out a huge horny hand for the cup. 'Hand it over, George.'

'No, no, Grandma!' George cried out, pulling the cup away. 'You mustn't! You're not to have it!'

'Give it to me, boy!' yelled Grandma.

'Don't!' cried Mrs Kranky. 'That's George's Marvellous ...'

'Everything's George's round here!' shouted Grandma. 'George's this, George's that! I'm fed up with it!' She snatched the cup out of little George's hand and carried it high up out of reach.

'Drink it up, Grandma,' Mr Kranky said, grinning hugely. 'Lovely tea.'

'No!' the other two cried. 'No, no, no!'

But it was too late. The ancient beanpole had already put the cup to her lips, and in one gulp she swallowed everything that was in it.

'Mother!' wailed Mrs Kranky. 'You've just drunk fifty doses of George's Marvellous Medicine Number Four and look what one tiny spoonful did to that little old brown hen!'

But Grandma didn't even hear her. Great clouds of steam were already pouring out of her mouth and she was beginning to whistle.

'This is going to be interesting,' Mr Kranky said, still grinning.

'Now you've done it!' cried Mrs Kranky, glaring at her husband.

'You've cooked the old girl's goose!'

'I didn't do anything,' Mr Kranky said.

'Oh, yes you did! You told her to drink it!'

A tremendous hissing sound was coming from above their heads. Steam was shooting out of Grandma's mouth and nose and ears and whistling as it came.

'She'll feel better after she's let off a bit of steam,' Mr Kranky said.

'She's going to blow up!' Mrs Kranky wailed. 'Her boiler's going to burst!'

'Stand clear,' Mr Kranky said.

George was quite alarmed. He stood up and ran back a few paces. The

jets of
white steam kept squirting out of the skinny old hag's head, and the
whistling
was so high and shrill it hurt the ears.
'Call the fire-brigade!' cried Mrs Kranky. 'Call the police! Man the
hose-pipes!'
'Too late,' said Mr Kranky, looking pleased.
'Grandma!' shrieked Mrs Kranky. 'Mother! Run to the drinking-trough
and put your
head under the water!'
But even as she spoke, the whistling suddenly stopped and the steam
disappeared.
That was when Grandma began to get smaller. She had started off
with her head as
high as the roof of the house, but now she was coming down fast.
'Watch this, George!' Mr Kranky shouted, hopping around the yard
and flapping
his arms. 'Watch what happens when someone's had fifty spoonfuls
instead of
one!'
Very soon, Grandma was back to normal height.
'Stop!' cried Mrs Kranky. 'That's just right.'
But she didn't stop. Smaller and smaller she got ... down and down
she went.
In another half minute she was no bigger than a bottle of lemonade.
'How d'you feel, mother?' asked Mrs Kranky anxiously.
Grandma's tiny face still bore the same foul and furious expression it
had
always had. Her eyes, no bigger now than little keyholes, were blazing
with
anger. 'How do I feel?' she yelled. 'How d'you think I feel? How would
you feel
if you'd been a glorious giant a minute ago and suddenly you're a
miserable
midget?'
'She's still going!' shouted Mr Kranky gleefully. 'She's still getting
smaller!'
And by golly, she was.
Then she was no bigger than a cigarette, Mrs Kranky made a grab for
her. She
held her in her hands and she cried, 'How do I stop her getting smaller
still?'
'You can't,' said Mr Kranky. 'She's had fifty times the right amount.'
'I must stop her!' Mrs Kranky wailed. 'I can hardly see her as it is!'

‘Catch hold of each end and pull,’ Mr Kranky said.
By then, Grandma was the size of a match-stick and still shrinking fast.
A moment later, she was no bigger than a pin ...
Then a pumpkin seed ...
Then ...
Then ...
‘Where is she?’ cried Mrs Kranky. ‘I’ve lost her!’
‘Hooray,’ said Mr Kranky.
‘She’s gone! She’s disappeared completely!’ cried Mrs Kranky.
‘That’s what happens to you if you’re grumpy and bad-tempered,’ said Mr Kranky.
‘Great medicine of yours, George.’
George didn’t know what to think.
For a few minutes, Mrs Kranky kept wandering round with a puzzled look on her face, saying, ‘Mother, where are you? Where’ve you gone? Where’ve you got to?’
How can I find you?’ But she calmed down quite quickly. And by lunchtime, she was saying, ‘Ah well, I suppose it’s all for the best, really. She was a bit of a nuisance around the house, wasn’t she?’
‘Yes,’ Mr Kranky said. ‘She most certainly was.’
George didn’t say a word. He felt quite trembly. He knew something tremendous had taken place that morning. For a few brief moments he had touched with the very tips of his fingers the edge of a magic world.

15. Vaarwel, Ouma

“Daar’s nog iets wat jy uitgelaat het,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Ek kan nie dink wat dit kan wees nie,” sê Marius.

“Gee die stryd gewonne,” sê mev. Krompl. “Laat vaar julle pogings. Julie gaan dit nooit regkry nie.” Mnr. Krompl lyk moedeloos.

Marius voel ook maar moedeloos. Hy hurk nog altyd op die grond met die lepel in die een hand en die koppievol medisyne in die ander. Die belaglike bruin hennetjie stap stadig weg.

Op dieselfde oomblik kom Ouma oor die werf gestap. Van haar groot hoogte gluur sy op die drie mense onder haar neer en skree: “Wat gaan hier aan? Hoekom het niemand vir my vanoggend ’n koppie tee gebring nie? Dis al erg genoeg dat ek by die rotte en muise moet slaap, maar ek is nie van plan om sonder ee klaar te kom nie! Tee! En spek en eiers! En rooster-brood met botter!”

“Jammer, Ma,” sê mev. Krompl. “Ons was vreeslik besig.

Ek sal dadelik vir Ma iets gaan haal.”

“Laat Marius dit kry, die lui klein vuilgoed!” skree Ouma. Net toe sy dit sê, gewaar die ou vrou die koppie in Marius se hand. Sy buig af en tuur bysiende daarna. Sy sien maar sleg, maar sy kan sien dat daar bruin vloeistof in is. Vir haar lyk dit na tee. “Aha!” skree sy. “Aha! Dan is dit hoe sake staan, nê? Jy sorg goed genoeg vir jouself! Jy maak heeltemal seker dat jy ’n lekker koppie tee het! Maar jy bring nie vir arme Ouma een nie! Ek het altyd geweet jy’s ’n selfsugtige vark!”

“Nee, Ouma,” sê Marius. “Dis nie ...”

“Moenie al weer lieg nie, seun!” skree die enorme ou vrou. “Gee dit dadelik hier!”

“Nee!” roep mev. Krompl. “Nee, Ma, moenie! Dis nie vir Manie!” /

“Nou’s jy ook al teen my!” skree Ouma. “My eie dogter wil nie hê ek moet tee kry nie! Wil julle my van die dors laat omkom?”

Mnr. Krompl kyk na die nare ou vrou en glimlag liefies. “Natuurlik is dit vir jou, Ouma,” sê hy. “Neem dit en drink dit terwyl dit lekker warm is.”

“Dis presies wat ek gaan doen,” sê Ouma. Sy buig af en steek ’n enorme horingagtige hand na die koppie uit. “Gee hier, Marius.”

“Nee, nee, Ouma!” sê Marius en trek die koppie weg.

“Ouma moenie! Dis nie vir Ouma nie!” “Gee dit vir my, droesem!” gil Ouma.

“Moenie, Ma! roep mev. Krompl uit. “Dis Marius se merkwaardige ...”

“Alles hier rond is Marius s’n!” skree Ouma. “Marius dit en Marius dát. Ek is siek en sat daarvan!” Sy gryp die koppie by Marius en bring dit na haar mond.

“Drink dit, Ouma,” sê mnr. Krompl met ’n breë glimlag. “Lekker tee.”

“Nee!” skree die ander twee. “Nee, nee, nee!”

Maar dit is te laat. Die ou vrou het reeds die koppie tot by haar lippe gebring en nou ledig sy dit met een teug.

“Ma!” gil mev. Krompl. “Ma het nou net vyftig dosisse van Marius se merkwaardige medisyne nommer vier gedrink, en kyk wat het een klein lepeltjie aan daardie ou bruin hennetjie gedoen!”

Maar Ouma hoor haar nie eens nie. Groot wolke stoom borrel by haar mond uit en oomblikke later begin sy soos ’n stoomketel fluit.

“Dit gaan interessant wees,” sê mnr. Krompl. Hy glimlag nog steeds.

“Nou’s dit klaar met kees!” roep mev. Krompl uit en gluur haar man aan. “Jy het my ma verongeluk!”

“Ek het niks gedoen nie,” sê mnr. Krompl.

“O ja, jy het! Jy’t haar gesê sy moet dit drink!”

Ver bo hulle koppe is daar ’n geweldige sisgeluid. Stoom borrel fluitend by Ouma se mond en neus en ore uit.

“Sy sal beter voel as sy eers ’n bietjie stoom afgeblaas het,” sê mnr. Krompl.

“Sy gaan ontplof!” huil mev. Krompl. “Haar ketel gaan bars!”

“Staan opsy,” sê mnr. Krompl. /

Marius is erg ontsteld. Hy staan op en hardloop ’n paar tree agteruit. Wit stoom spuit nog altyd by die ou vrou se kop uit, en die gefluit is so hoog en skril dat dit ’n mens se ore seer-maak.

“Roep die brandweer!” skree mev. Krompl. “Ontbied die polisie! Bring die brandslange!”

“Te laat!” sê mnr. Krompl en lyk ingenome.

“Ouma!” gil mev. Krompl. “Ma! Hardloop na die drinkbak en sit jou kop onder die water!”

Maar haar woorde is nog nie koud nie, toe hou die gefluit skielik op en die stoom verdwyn. En onmiddellik hierna begin Ouma krimp. Toe sy die brousel gedrink het, was haar kop so hoog soos die huis se dak, maar nou kom sy vinnig af.

“Kyk net, Marius!” roep mnr. Krompl, terwyl hy op die werf rondspring en sy arms rondswaai. “Kyk wat gebeur wanneer iemand vyftig lepelsvol drink in plaas van een!”

Baie gou is Ouma net so lank soos haar dogter. “Hou op!” roep mev. Krompl. “Dis net reg!”

Sy hou nie op nie. Kleiner en kleiner krimp sy ... al laer sak sy. Oor nog ’n halfminuut is sy skaars so groot soos ’n bot-tel limonade.

“Hoe voel Ma nou?” vra mev. Krompl bekommerd.

Ouma se gesiggie is nog steeds so suur en woedend soos altyd. Haar oë, wat nou piepklein geword het, skitter van woede. “Hoe voel ek?” gil sy. “Hoe dink jy voel ek? Hoe sal jy voel as jy ’n minuut gelede ’n heerlike reus was en skielik is jy ’n ellendige dwergie?”

“Sy is nog altyd aan die gang!” roep mnr. Krompl uitgelate. “Sy krimp nog steeds!”

En waarlik, hy oordryf nie.

Toe sy so lank is soos ’n sigaret, gryp mev. Kromp haar. Sy hou haar ma in haar hande en roep, “Hoe keer ek haar? Ek wil nie hê sy moet nog kleiner word nie!”

“Jy kan nie,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Sy’t vyftig keer soveel gedrink as wat sy moes.”

“Ek moet haar keer!” huil mev. Krompl. “Ek kan haar nou al byna nie meer sien nie!”

“Gryp haar kop en haar voete beet en trek,” sê mnr. Krompl.

Teen dié tyd is Ouma so lank soos ’n vuurhoutjie en sy krimp nog steeds vinnig.

’n Oomblik later is sy so lank soos ’n speld...

Toe ’n pampoensaad ...

Toe ...

Toe ...

“Waar is sy?” roep mev. Krompl uit. “Ek het haar verloor!”

“Hoerê,” sê mnr. Krompl.

“Sy’s weg! Sy’t heeltemal weggeraak!” snik mev. Krompl.

“Dis wat ’n mens oorkom as jy kla en seur en sanik,” sê mnr. Krompl.

“Puik medisyne wat jy gemaak het, Marius.” Marius weet nie wat om te dink nie.

Vir ’n paar minute dwaal mev. Krompl met ’n verdwaasde gesig rond. “Waar’s jy, Ma? Waar’s jy heen? Hoe kan ek jou kry?” Maar sy word gou kalmer. En toe dit tyd word vir mid-dagete, merk sy op: “Nou ja, dis seker maar goed so. Sy was eintlik ’n bietjie lastig in die huis, nê?”

“Ja,” sê mnr. Krompl. “Sy was beslis.”

Marius sê nie ’n woord nie. Hy voel ’n bietjie bewering. Hy weet dat ’n baie groot ding daardie oggend gebeur het. Vir ’n paar kortstondige oomblikke het hy met sy vingertoppe aan die rand van ’n towerwêreld geraak.

Roald Dahl was born in 1916 in Wales of Norwegian parents. He was educated in

England before starting work for the Shell Oil Company in Africa. He began

writing after a ‘monumental bash on the head’ sustained as an RAF

fighter pilot during the Second World War. Roald Dahl is one of the most successful and well-known of all children's writers. His books, which are read by children the world over, include James and the Giant Peach, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Magic Finger, Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator, Fantastic Mr Fox, Matilda, The Twits, The BFG and The Witches, winner of the 1983 Whitbread Award. Roald Dahl died in 1990 at the age of seventy-four.